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Mary
OF HUNGARY

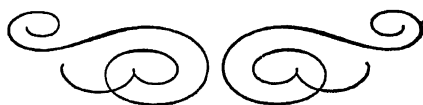
BOOKS BY JANE DE IONGH

Margaret of Austria

Mary of Hungary

Mary OF HUNGARY

Second Regent of
THE NETHERLANDS



By Jane de longh

TRANSLATED BY M. D. HERTER NORTON



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THE NETHERLANDS

CHARLES THE BOLD
Duke of Burgundy
married:

(1) Catherine of France

(3) Margaret of York

= (2) ISABELLA OF
BOURBON

MAXIMILIAN = MARY
OF AUSTRIA OF BURGUNDY
Emperor of Germany

MARGARET OF
AUSTRIA

Regent of the Netherlands
married:

- (1) Charles VIII of France
(2) Don Juan of Aragon and Castile
(3) Philibert, Duke of Savoy

PHILIP THE HANDSOME =
Archduke of Austria
Duke of Burgundy
King of Castile

SPAIN
FERDINAND OF = ISABELLA OF
ARAGON CASTILE

JUANA the Mad = DON JUAN ISABELLA MARY CATHARINE
married: married: married: married:
Margaret of (1) Alonzo Emanuel (1) Arthur,
Austria Portugal of Prince
(2) Emanuel of Portugal of Wales
of England

ÉLÉONORE (ALIÉNOR)

- married:
(1) Emanuel of Portugal
(2) Francis I of France

CHARLES V

Archduke of Austria
Emperor of Germany
married
Isabella of Portugal

YSABEAU

married
Christian II
of Denmark

FERDINAND

Archduke of Austria
King of Hungary
and Bohemia
Emperor of Germany

MARY

Archduchess of Austria
Queen of Hungary
and Bohemia
Regent of the Netherlands

CATHARINE

married
John III
of Portugal

HUNGARY

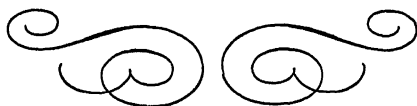
VLADISLAV II

ANNE DE CANDALE

ANNA =

LAJOS II =

Author's Note



CONCERNING the second great Regent of the Netherlands, Mary of Hungary, historians have hitherto maintained an almost unbroken silence. Of her predecessor, Margaret of Austria, many biographies have been published, also a large part of that Regent's correspondence, as well as an admirable "Itinerary", full of information about her journeys and activities. But apart from one study in Hungarian, not readily accessible to Western readers, only one short book has appeared about Mary of Hungary, published in 1855: *Les Pays-Bas sous Charles-Quint. Vie de Marie de Hongrie*, by Théodore Juste. Stracke's Göttingen dissertation, *Die Anfänge der Königin Maria von Ungarn, späteren Statthalterin Karls V*, which came out in 1940, does not go beyond the year 1526 and provides mainly political facts.

The titles of these two works may be indicative of the reason for such neglect. It was the absorbing figure of Charles V, that ruler of a world empire, which always commanded the attention of those who dealt with that period of European history. Beside the great Emperor-King his sister, the Queen Dowager of Hungary, remained but a shadowy form, a humble servant, whose aim in life was to carry out the will of her sovereign. Apart from Juste, who wrote a century ago, and who, as the title of his book shows, also regarded Mary chiefly as her brother's instrument, nobody has thought it worth while to penetrate more deeply into the character of this woman who ruled the Netherlands for twenty-five years, or to learn how it was that she helped to

establish the very unanimity of purpose in the Low Countries, which, only a generation later, was to prove fatal to her own dynasty.

At the time this book was written, prevailing conditions as well as its scope did not permit of exhaustive research of unpublished sources which today would once more be accessible in the archives of Brussels, Lille, Vienna, Simancas and elsewhere. But although only published material was available at the time, the works listed in the Bibliography made it possible to sketch a portrait of Charles V's remarkable sister. Part I, dealing with events mostly unknown to the general reader, has been more fully documented than Part II, in which better-known circumstances are described.

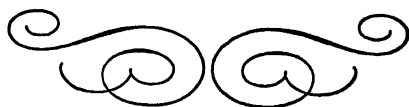
Although this life history of Charles V's great lieutenant cannot pretend to completeness, the author nevertheless hopes to have shown that those who have paid so little attention to Mary of Hungary have been mistaken. For evidently she was not only a remarkable personality, gifted, intelligent and courageous, but without her heroic efforts the House of Hapsburg could scarcely have maintained its domination over the Netherlands for so long.

THE
Crown of St. Stephen



CHAPTER ONE

Princes' Court



... par là la puissance de Dieu debvroit estre bien congneue et entendue: et sont les coups qu'il donne sur les grans plus cruelz et plus pesans et de plus longue duree que ne sont ceulx qu'il donne sur les petites gens.

... by this should the might of God be fully known and understood: the blows he deals to the great are more cruel and heavier and last longer than those he deals to the common people.

Philippe de Commines ¹

THE palace in which the children lived had changed its character several times during the course of the years.

The three eldest, Aliénor, Charles, and Ysabeau, had been taken there in the autumn of 1505, when their parents had left on their long and dangerous journey to Spain. At that moment the former episcopal palace in the narrow Keyzerstraat of Malines had been turned into a nursery where nannies and "bercheresses" determined the rhythm of each day. Aliénor and Charles, aged two and one, and the baby Ysabeau, born in the summer before her parents' departure, were surrounded by devoted women with melodious names—Gilette, Barbe, Josine, Jeanne—supervised by an impressive matron, Donna Anna de Beaumont.²

It was not long before a different atmosphere pervaded "Princes' Court", as the house had now come to be called. A new baby, the Archduchess Mary, had recently been born, but the three elder children had left their old nurseries. They had been given a wonderful school bench decorated with coats of arms in bright colors, and a low table on which to put their ABC

books, heavy parchment tomes bound in velvet. They enjoyed looking at the gold capital letters, the gay miniatures. Their education had begun, and the old palace in the Keyzerstraat became more and more like a boarding school.

A boarding school which in due course changed into a military academy. Although Monseigneur Charles still attended a number of lessons in the company of his sisters, after he reached the age of nine it was decided that he should be trained in the use of arms. Sword and lance replaced the alphabet book, and several young noblemen now shared the lessons the prince received from fencing and riding masters. Now only little Mary stood in awe of the two wooden horses of which Prince Charles had been so proud. The palace became noisy. Pages romped in the corridors, sometimes drowning Charles' quiet presence with the uproar of their rough games. They were severely reprimanded on such occasions; for although Monseigneur was their playmate, they were not allowed to forget that he was also their ruler.

In these boyish surroundings the three princesses fell somewhat into the background. Dressed alike in stiff, mostly dark damask or velvet, piped with white, a trim white fichu softening the square neckline, and on their fair heads velvet bonnets or "timpelets" lined with white silk, they looked like miniature ladies of fashion. The two elder were taught to play the clavichord and the lute, and Donna Anna promised that very soon they should start riding lessons. Four-year-old Mary looked with round, respectful eyes at her big brother, who was treated by everyone with so much deference. Monseigneur Charles was the center of Mary's life. Those early years of admiration and reverence played a great part in determining the future of this youngest sister of his. But for the moment she had not yet acquired that heroic devotion which in the years to come would bind her to him and to the dynasty whose head he was. At present she was only a funny tiny figure in the high rooms and corridors of the Prinsenhof, a walking doll in long, stiff skirts.

The children's father, Philip, Archduke of Austria, called the Handsome, had inherited from his mother, Mary of Burgundy, the dukedom of that name and the other provinces over which she had ruled, usually referred to as the Netherlands. His father, the German Emperor Maximilian I of Habsburg, was Europe's greatest schemer in those days of complicated political

alliances, when power was every ruler's first aim. Though he possessed many very human, very lovable qualities which made him an adoring and adored husband, a devoted father, a kind and generous grandfather, Maximilian was nevertheless a match for those potentates of his day who live on in history as the personification of lust for power, of cunning, greed, cruelty, and unscrupulous deceit. Somehow Maximilian of Austria seemed to be more fortunate than his contemporaries who were his competitors. For although terrible blows fell upon his House during his own day, by the time his rule was over the Habsburg dynasty had developed from a modest provincial ruling family into a world power against which the heirs of Maximilian's most formidable opponents were unable to win any victories.

Such a phenomenal development had not been achieved without wars. But these had always possessed at least the appearance of justification, since Maximilian had taken care to create for himself a great number of "rights" that took shape in the course of many years of patient diplomacy. His son Philip and his daughter Margaret were his chief tools in forging the greatness of the House of Habsburg. With an uncanny feeling for the future, he managed to transform the bond of enmity against France, which linked him to the "Spanish" or "Catholic" Monarchs, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, into a dynastic alliance that should make his grandchildren the rulers of those kingdoms of Naples and Sicily for which Charles VIII of France had contended with Ferdinand.

In order to create this alliance, which altered the face of European history, the lives of two Spanish and two Habsburg children were united. Philip, Archduke of Austria and Duke of Burgundy, married the Infanta Juana, second daughter of the Catholic Kings, known to history as Juana the Mad. And Philip's sister Margaret, who later became Regent of the Netherlands, married Prince Juan, who would presumably succeed his father, Ferdinand, in Aragon, and his mother, Isabella the Great, in Castile. It seemed inevitable that one of Maximilian's grandsons would become King of Aragon and Castile, Granada and León, of Naples and Sicily, and of the unknown "Indian" territories which Columbus' genius had discovered for the Catholic Monarchs on the opposite side of the Ocean.

When Prince Juan of Aragon died suddenly in 1497, followed within a space of three years by his eldest sister and her baby

son, Philip of Habsburg-Burgundy and his wife Juana became heirs to the crowns of Aragon and Castile. It was to meet their future subjects that they had undertaken the journey to Spain in 1501, leaving their children behind in Malines.

During this visit the Catholic Monarchs were obliged to realize the truth of the rumors that had reached them about the life of their daughter and the lighthearted Flemish prince. They saw the frightening change that had taken place in the Infanta's character and witnessed passionate scenes between the young couple, during which Juana betrayed a state of mind which her mother did not fail to recognize as the beginning of madness. Philip suddenly decided to return to the Netherlands, but pregnancy prevented the Archduchess from accompanying him. When, after the birth of her son Ferdinand, she was at last able to rejoin him, only to discover that he had whiled away the time of her absence in a love affair with one of her ladies in waiting, Juana's unhappiness still further disturbed her already precarious mental balance. Torn between fits of passionate protest at Philip's faithless behavior and her moods of dull, speechless resignation, Juana expected her fifth child. On September 15, 1505, between ten and eleven in the morning,³ she gave birth to a daughter. The doctors feared for her life. Not until a month later could the Venetian ambassador report to his government that the Archduchess had at last completely recovered.⁴

The baby who came into the world under such tragic circumstances was Mary, Archduchess of Austria.

On the twentieth of September the child was christened at Brussels in the presence of her grandfather the Emperor himself.⁵ The royal christening procession offered a spectacle which the entire population of the city had come to see. A raised wooden platform had been constructed between the archducal residence, Coudenberghe Palace, and the church of Notre Dame du Sablon, and the splendid cortège moved slowly along it in the light of many hundreds of torches, some erected alongside, some carried by noblemen of the imperial and archducal households. In the midst of their flickering, smoky flames the baby princess was conveyed to the church in the arms of Madame de Ravestein, seated in a litter borne by gentlemen of the household. Ladies in waiting and maids of honor, representatives of nobility and Church, high officers of state and city, heralds and trumpeters—they followed the child in colorful groups through the high,

wide-open portals of Notre Dame du Sablon. Church bells rang out over the festive town.

Inside the church thousands of candles lit up a brilliant company crowded round the elevated platform upon which the ceremony would take place. Cloth-of-gold and crimson velvet lined with white damask decorated the dais upon which stood the precious christening font. From the church walls hung with tapestries the legendary figures of the Trojan drama looked down on the worldly throng of courtiers and ambassadors at their feet.

The whisper of many voices which had filled the church died down. The famous Burgundian court singers started a solemn melody. And while the Emperor presented his grandchild at the font, the Bishop of Arras gave her the name her grandfather had so often pronounced with tenderness, the name of her grandmother of Burgundy: Mary.

The *Te Deum* sounded. The Emperor and the Bishop and their suite of nobles and ecclesiastics descended from the dais. A rush of sound, an uproar almost, ran through the overcrowded church. Horns and trumpets rang out, people jostled each other to get a glimpse of His Imperial Majesty, of the ladies holding the infant princess. Someone screamed, in fear of a panic. The Bishop of Arras lost his balance in the crowd and barely escaped being trodden down. The crozier, with which he tried to steady himself, broke in three pieces, its golden scroll was crushed underfoot.

Was it some sinister portent, or merely an accident, such showing-up of the crozier's brittleness at the baptism of this child who one day would sympathize with the doctrine of the Reformation? At that moment nobody in Notre Dame du Sablon could read the sign. For Martin Luther was still nothing more than a restless, tormented young monk who only a month before had left the university and the world to seek peace for his soul in the service of God.

The Burgundian court chronicler Molinet noted down what happened on that important day, but he omitted to add whether the people of Brussels had also seen Mary's father, Philip the Handsome, walking in the baptismal procession. Therefore we can only see, before our mind's eye, Emperor Maximilian alone, unaccompanied by his son, striding along the raised platform in the midst of the great torchlight illumination, the "grande

alumerie de flambeaux".⁶ In that festive cortège his splendid appearance attracted everyone's attention. And we may suppose that on his way from church to palace Maximilian's fertile imagination busied itself with visions of the role this youngest of his granddaughters might be made to play in the service of the House of Habsburg.

That House had for long coveted the kingdom of Hungary and had from time to time already ruled over it. In 1437, at the death of the German Emperor Sigismund, who was also King of Hungary and Bohemia, both these kingdoms passed to his son-in-law, the Habsburg duke, Albrecht of Austria.⁷ Albrecht's son, Ladislaus Posthumus, began his rule over the two countries under the guardianship of his uncle, Emperor Frederick III, and when he died childless, part of the Hungarian nobility elected Sigismund's natural son, Matthias Hunyadi, as king, while another party chose Frederick III. The Crown of St. Stephen, symbol of Magyar royal power, had been brought to Austria by Sigismund's daughter, and Frederick III had himself crowned with it in the belief that this would give him an advantage over his rival, Matthias.

Matthias, however, needed no crown to help him. His influence in Hungary became so considerable that Frederick thought it wise to accept his offer of peace. By the Treaty of Sopron (Ödenburg) of 1463 a singular network of contradictory agreements was created between Habsburg and Matthias Hunyadi.⁸ Frederick III kept the title of King of Hungary, which the Hungarian magnates had, after all, offered him, yet he agreed to return the Crown of St. Stephen, from which he had derived his authority, to his rival Matthias Hunyadi, against payment of eighty thousand ducats. Moreover he adopted Matthias as his son, and in case Matthias should die without male issue, Frederick, or one of his sons, was to succeed him as King of Hungary.

But this sly policy brought Frederick little advantage. His experiences with his adopted son were very bitter indeed, and he lived to see Matthias conquer the greater part of his Austrian land and himself driven from his capital of Vienna, on which he never set eyes again. For many years Frederick wandered about the German Empire, from which he derived his sacred title but no income whatever, so that monasteries and cities had to contribute funds to keep him alive.⁹

But though Frederick III was poor and powerless, he might well have great hopes for the future. For he possessed an enterprising young son, Maximilian, who through his marriage to Mary, heiress to the Duchy of Burgundy, had acquired influence and wealth. When in 1486 Maximilian was elected King of the Romans, as future successor to his father the Emperor, one of the Electors' main reasons for choosing him was the possibility of liberating the southeasterly regions of the Empire from their Hungarian conquerors with the support of Maximilian's Burgundian provinces.¹⁰

In the spring of 1490 the death of Matthias brought about the situation foreseen in the Treaty of Sopron. Matthias left no legitimate children and Maximilian, Frederick's only son, invoked the agreement by which the Hungarian succession had been promised to him. There were rivals in the field however: Matthias' illegitimate son, János Corvinus, and the King of Poland's two sons, Johan Albert and Vladislav, the latter already King of Bohemia. All three declared themselves ready to submit to the vote of the Hungarian Diet, which finally elected Vladislav of Bohemia King of Hungary.

This did not mean that Vladislav was to enjoy his new dignity undisturbed. His brother Johan Albert promptly attacked him, devastating northern Hungary, while Maximilian seized this opportunity to liberate Austria from Hungarian occupation. Within a month his armies captured Vienna, and the next stage of the campaign carried him across the Hungarian border.¹¹ A number of prelates and nobles sided with him against King Vladislav, and Maximilian would have reached Buda in a few days if the Habsburg mercenaries, given no time to loot the conquered cities, had not demanded more pay. They refused to march on and withdrawal to the west became inevitable.¹²

Maximilian's retreat enabled King Vladislav to force his brother to a settlement, after which he directed his armies against Austria. Negotiations were started which led in November 1491 to the Peace of Bratislava (Pressburg), more or less a repetition of the Treaty of Sopron. Like his father, Maximilian was to bear the title of King of Hungary, although Vladislav and his legitimate sons continued to exercise royal rights. Should Vladislav leave no male heir, then the Crown of St. Stephen would become the property of the Habsburg dynasty. This treaty, however, was never ratified by the Hungarian Diet, and moreover Maximilian's

chances were lessened by the creation of a powerful Hungarian party which proclaimed that Hungary would never again accept a foreigner as king, least of all a Habsburg.

But when in 1503 a daughter was born to King Vladislav and his French wife, Maximilian began to evolve new plans which should assure the Hungarian succession to the House of Habsburg under all conceivable circumstances. The birth of a Hungarian princess might be followed by that of a crown prince. The Emperor's tested methods—weddings rather than wars—might be applied in Eastern Europe also. They could not be put into practice soon enough.

And now his own newly christened granddaughter provided him with fresh building material for that ever more powerful Habsburg dynasty. Here was a tender reality which would enable him to carry out the bold plans he had inherited from his father, Frederick III, who had built so slowly but so solidly. Maximilian, having brought the Iberian States under the influence of his dynasty by means of his son Philip and his daughter Margaret, could now begin to realize another aspect of Austria's future world power with the aid of two of his grandchildren. He would conquer in a peaceful, matrimonial way the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary, Austria's neighbors on the map of Europe.

To this end Mary should contribute her share. Already, as the christening procession wound its way back to Coudenberghe Palace, her fate was sealed. With every step the litter bore her towards an inescapable future of glory and sorrow.

In January 1506 Philip the Handsome, Archduke of Austria, and his wife Juana, who at the death of her mother, Isabella, had become Queen of Castile, again went to Spain, leaving their children at Malines in the care of Donna Anna de Beaumont. A new "bercheresse", damoiselle Marguerite de Poitiers, came to the old palace to look after the new baby, and it was her face that Mary first learned to recognize. But before she was old enough to smile at her nurse, news had reached Malines of a catastrophe that was to influence European politics for many years to come.

In the midst of the festivities welcoming Philip and Juana to Spain, the young Archduke of Austria fell ill and died, and his wife, struck by the heaviest blow life could have dealt her, gave way to despair in such a manner that it frightened those around

her. "The King is dead, the Queen is mad!" ¹³ The cry sounded through Castile, echoed over Aragon, over France, over all Europe. It was a disaster that seemed to spell the end of the House of Habsburg.

The tragic news reached the Low Countries and the quiet town of Malines which now sheltered within its walls a minor Duke of Burgundy, Archduke of Austria and possible King of Castile. Monseigneur Charles and his two eldest sisters heard it from Charles' tutor, the Seigneur de Chièvres.¹⁴ Its significance was far beyond their grasp. But their childish hearts were grieved, Chièvres wrote to Maximilian, and one of them had remarked that now they needed their grandfather twice as much as before.

During Archduke Charles' minority Maximilian once more exercised the regency over the Burgundian provinces, as he had done before on behalf of his son Philip. The Netherlands, formerly so obstinate in their resistance to a foreign ruler, this time accepted the imperial regime without a murmur and with a growing understanding of their own need for unity. They welcomed Maximilian's decision to appoint his daughter Margaret, Duchess of Savoy, Mary of Burgundy's daughter, and aunt of their future "natural ruler", Charles, as representative of the central government.

Thus, in the spring of 1507, the Netherlands were given their first woman regent and the children of Malines a foster mother who was to mean more to them than their own mother. "Madame de Savoie" chose Malines as her residence and had a comfortable small palace made ready for her own use, immediately opposite the Prinsenhof which housed her nephew and nieces.

It must have made a great change for these lonely children when their young and energetic aunt came to live in their town. The three eldest were allowed to take part in all the celebrations organized as a welcome to the new regent. Whenever Madame de Savoie was obliged to leave Malines, she could trust the devoted Grande Maîtresse of the Prinsenhof, Anna de Beaumont, to keep her regularly informed about the health of her charges. Between important political documents we find a letter from the Regent to Donna Anna to say that she was worried at the news of her niece Mary's illness, but hoped it was only a children's complaint of which she would soon be cured.¹⁵

Very little is known of Mary's life in these years. We can only imagine her small person to be present whenever court

historians or foreign diplomats mention "the princesses" in the company of Madame de Savoie, or "Monseigneur the Archduke Charles and his sisters" attending public ceremonies or receptions. Of many expenses recorded in the Burgundian accounts on behalf of the children, Mary must also have had her share. She too was to be taught by Monseigneur Charles' first teacher, the Spaniard Jean d'Anchiata,¹⁶ who was succeeded in 1513 by his compatriot Louis de Vaca; and we know for certain that she received music lessons from the organist of the Archducal chapel, Hendrik Bredeniers. The accounts for 1511 record a gift in money to Bredeniers, as a reward for the trouble he still took daily to instruct the Archduke and his sisters in playing the clavichord and other instruments. Like Aliénor and Ysabeau, Mary, who had inherited her father's and grandfather's talent for music, no doubt also learned to play more than one instrument.

Moreover, there were the many feminine accomplishments which the Habsburg princesses must have learned from their Grande Maîtresse, or perhaps even from their Most Serene aunt, the Regent Margaret herself. For Margaret had learned in France and Spain how to use the embroidery needle and in Flanders how to make lace, and would spend many hours at her lace-pillow.

Aliénor, Ysabeau and Mary learned more than needlework from their aunt Margaret. Through her they received a wealth of impressions such as only a highly cultured woman could have imparted to them. How often must they not have listened, in the small palace opposite their own, among the art treasures the Regent had collected over many years, to the music of the famous Burgundian choir, to the conversation of the scholars and artists she used to gather around her. How often must they not have looked with their aunt at the drawings and designs she received from the architects and sculptors who were working for her on that immortal monument, the church at Brou. How unforgettable must have been the intimate library of the Court of Savoy, with its exquisite pictures, where Margaret kept, in addition to the old Burgundian Library, her own valuable books and manuscripts.

The taste and refinement, the luxury and splendor of this northern renaissance court were lit up by the warm human qualities of the woman who ruled it, the nobility of heart and

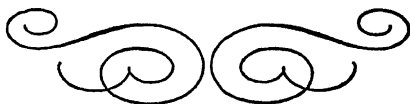
mind and the simple, unproblematic piety which had no idea of the doubts that were to haunt a following generation.

All this made a beneficent, harmonious background for the young children of Malines. They became deeply attached to Margaret. Aunt and kind mother—"Madame ma Tante et bonne Mère"—they used to call her later in their letters, after they had been parted from her for years. And through adversity and disaster they clung to the memory of the woman who had looked after them like a mother and had protected and nurtured their young hearts and minds.

How much the youngest of the children, Mary, owed to these sunny, peaceful years in the Netherlands, and what influence they had upon her character as it was to unfold later in an entirely different world, one can only guess. Undoubtedly her youth in Malines, where she saw life centering round two such impressive personalities—her foster mother the Regent, and her brother Monseigneur Charles, Duke of Burgundy, Archduke of Austria, King of Castile—contributed much to that principle which was to guide and sustain her in her turn, as it had sustained Margaret of Austria through a life of tragedy and struggle: dedication to the House of Habsburg, which, according to her sincere conviction, was predestined to rule the whole world.

CHAPTER TWO

So Much Love and Honor



Monseigneur, j'ai tout perdu au trespas de l'empereur, nostre bon seigneur et grandpère, que ne le vous saurait assez complaindre, à cause qu'il m'a tousjours monsté tant d'amour et d'oneur.

Monseigneur, I have lost everything with the death of the emperor, our kind lord and grandfather, and I cannot tell you how sad I am, as he always showed me so much love and honor.

Mary to her brother Ferdinand
Innsbruck, February 28, 1519¹

INSIDE the walls of Malines the calm days passed without much variety, stretching into years. The royal children lived their little joys and sorrows, their disappointments and consolations, and under the influences that surrounded them their very different characters took shape. Monseigneur Charles, with his alternating indolence and fits of temper, loved and obeyed his kind governor, whose singleness of purpose supported him. Aliénor and Ysabeau, attractive and full of charm, with their oval faces and large gentle eyes, were admired and adored, but nevertheless remained modest and unspoilt, as their grandmother Mary of Burgundy had been.

It seemed that the youngest princess had only her name in common with that gentle duchess. Mary was made of quite another metal, and those who recognized in Monseigneur Charles the sudden attacks of violence of his grandfather, Charles the Bold, may well have detected other traits of the great Burgundian duke's character in the prince's youngest sister. But what important person, setting down his experiences in book or diplo-

matic message, ever mentioned the bright little girl who was hardly noticed in the bustle of court activities? She was looked upon as a mere pawn in the hands of her grandfather, the Emperor, and of her aunt, the Regent of the Netherlands, and no one paid any attention to the developing personality that would in time become one of the main pillars upon which her brother Charles's empire was to rest.

She, who in later life was never to evade an issue, never to hesitate before an enemy, never to fear danger, must, in the little world under Anna de Beaumont's rule, often have shown amazing resistance to anything that thwarted her. Although the smallest of them all, she may well have bossed her two elder sisters, to the amusement of her aunt Margaret, who would have recognized in her determined young foster child some facets of her own character.

Mary, who in years to come would seek distraction in hunting, was no doubt more interested in Monseigneur Charles's dogs and horses than in Madame Ysabeau's dolls. Even in those days she must have loved music, the form of art in which in later years she was to find so much comfort and which more than any other served to enrich and soften her difficult life. But it was above all her passion for the royal sport of her time that marked her as a worthy granddaughter of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian of Austria, even though she seemed to have inherited most of her qualities rather from her other grandparents, the severe, virile and brave Isabella of Castile and that intelligent, energetic diplomat, Ferdinand of Aragon.

Though history has remained silent about the character of "Madame Marye", it was very busy indeed with the fate her grandfather Maximilian, that great magician of European affairs, was weaving for her out of a complicated web of intrigues and negotiations, promises and agreements. At her birth the Emperor had decided what part she would have to play. Hungary was to be her destination, though by what road she would reach that country even he did not yet know.

Since Vladislav of Hungary's marriage² and particularly since the birth of a princess of Hungary, Maximilian must have felt that the conditions upon which his agreement with Vladislav rested had very little chance of ever being realized. When, in the spring of 1505, Vladislav became seriously ill and a Habsburg

succession in Hungary seemed quite likely, the anti-Habsburg party under the leadership of János Zápolya decided to protect the country against still more foreign rule by a marriage between Zápolya and the baby princess Anna. This would assure Zápolya a positive right to the Crown of St. Stephen, which his party wished to bestow on him. A Diet was called for the purpose of appointing a "Gubernator" in case Vladislav should not live—none other, of course, than the prospective king, Zápolya himself. King Vladislav had not been consulted about these measures at all.

This was the moment for Maximilian to stage a countermove. In July he called in the aid of the German Estates in order to protect Vladislav and his family against their rebellious subjects and to save the Habsburg succession in Hungary. At the same time the imperial ambassadors to the court of Buda repeated the proposal they had already transmitted to Vladislav in January, namely, that one of Maximilian's grandsons should marry Princess Anna of Hungary and take over her right of succession to the Crown. But the Emperor was too experienced a matchmaker not to prefer two marriages to a single one. The children of Malines were, after all, at his disposal.

During the following winter Queen Anne of Hungary expected another child, and she was convinced that this time it would be a boy. The rumor reached Maximilian, who decided to act immediately on the Queen's presentiment. A crown prince of Hungary was indicated as a husband for one of the little princesses of Malines. And who would be a better match for a still unborn boy than his youngest granddaughter, Mary, born only a few months ago?

Of the many marriage agreements Maximilian concluded in his day, this one, signed on March 17, 1506, was certainly the most speculative and unreal. To dispose of the life of a six-month-old princess was nothing extraordinary. But that she should be engaged to a boy not yet born was little short of fantastic, even in those days of royal child-marriages.

A marriage between Princess Anna and one of the Habsburg princes was in its way no less unreal. Which one of Maximilian's two grandsons should marry the Hungarian princess, Charles from the Netherlands or Ferdinand from Spain, had not yet been decided, but in either case, should Anna die before the wedding, a younger sister—as yet unborn—was to take her place. Under

all circumstances the bonds between Austria and the Hungarian royal house seemed to be firmly tied. In order to make his attachment to the Emperor even more clear to his subjects, Vladislav appointed Maximilian guardian of his children, lest he should die before they came of age.

But what was the value of these agreements, opposed as they were by the Hungarian nobles? Maximilian proved that in addition to his inexhaustible imagination he still possessed a sense of reality when he wrote to one of his followers that affairs in Hungary looked well but were still hanging by a thread.³ He also recalled the encouraging fact that in 1491, when the Hungarian Diet refused to ratify the Bratislava agreement concerning the Habsburg succession, a number of noblemen had approved it; and he now hastened to refresh the somewhat unreliable memory of these gentlemen through a special ambassador, at the same time sending to the Hungarian border a division of German soldiers, who plundered the estates of the very barons he was reminding of their promises to Habsburg.

On the first of July, just when four Hungarian dignitaries had set out for negotiations to be held in the Emperor's camp, the sound of trumpets from the citadel of Buda announced the news that Queen Anne of Hungary had given birth to a son. The prince was called Lajos, Louis, after the founder of Anne's family, the French king Louis IX, known to history as Saint Louis.

King Vladislav's joy soon turned into sorrow. Queen Anne, whose beauty and courage had been her husband's comfort and support, did not survive the birth of the heir to the throne. The child, born prematurely, seemed hardly strong enough to live.⁴ The royal physicians could think of no better incubator for the delicate baby than the carcasses of freshly killed animals, inside which he was kept warm. Strange rumors circulated.⁵ People whispered that the boy had been born without a skin, and that the pigs killed to keep him warm were meant to make up this deficiency.

Three weeks after Lajos' birth, peace was concluded between Habsburg and Hungary. The treaty contained a clause by which Maximilian reserved for himself all rights to the throne of Hungary. The weak creature in the castle of Buda whom the doctors were trying to keep alive seemed to have little chance of surviving for long. The end of the Jagiello family might only be a

matter of years. The gates of the royal castle of Buda would be opened to Habsburg by time itself, provided the treaties were ratified, provided the children from Malines were allowed to play their part.

On November 12th, 1507, the agreement between Maximilian and Vladislav of Hungary was confirmed. Centuries of European history lay enclosed in this contract, which stipulated that Princess Anna of Hungary should be given in marriage to Charles or Ferdinand of Habsburg, while Crown Prince Lajos should marry Mary of Austria or her younger sister Catherine, recently born in Spain. Moreover the Emperor gave the undertaking, of outstanding importance to the future of Europe, that he would pass on his Austrian lands to that one of his grandsons who married Princess Anna. With this promise to King Vladislav Maximilian laid the foundation of the division of the House of Habsburg into a Spanish and an Austrian branch, whereby its burden could be halved and its glory doubled.⁶

"Captus Ludovicus" ("Louis captured"), Cuspinianus, the imperial ambassador, wrote in his diary for 1507 as the only happening worth mention. He himself had conducted the negotiations and knew the difficulties that had attended this precious haul. He was soon to discover that a great deal of water would still have to flow down the Danube from Vienna to Buda before his triumphant remark became a reality.

For the Hungarian Estates regarded their king's agreement with Habsburg as high treason of the first order. The Diet of April 1507, convened by Vladislav to approve the coronation of Crown Prince Lajos on his first birthday, took a very different step. It curtailed the king's rights, which, according to the Estates, Vladislav had so shamefully abused. In future the king would be allowed to decide questions of policy only with the agreement of his Council. The decision concerning Lajos' coronation was postponed for a year. It seemed desirable to keep Vladislav in check by the threat that his son might not be allowed to succeed him.

Maximilian too had signed an agreement which he would probably be unable to keep. For when he agreed that Princess Anna should marry either Charles or Ferdinand, the elder of these two boys, seven-year-old Charles, was already engaged to be married for the second time, namely to Princess Mary of England, daughter of King Henry VII. His alliance with Anna of

Hungary could therefore be carried into effect only at the cost of that link with England, which the Regent of the Netherlands, Margaret, considered so important for her provinces and which she had so carefully maintained with love and money. Many things would have to change, indeed, before the Emperor's energetic and purposeful daughter would be willing to give up her English policy and set Monseigneur Charles free for a Hungarian match.

The other possibility foreseen in the various agreements with Hungary was that not the eldest, but the second of the Emperor's grandsons should marry Princess Anna. In 1507, however, Maximilian was not free to dispose of this prince either. Ferdinand was the favorite of his other grandfather, the King of Aragon, after whom he was named and at whose court he had lived since his mother had had to leave Spain for the Netherlands. King Ferdinand had his own projects for his grandson's future and it was unlikely that he would allow the Emperor to use him for the purpose of increasing the power of the House of Habsburg, the growing influence of which he regarded with the greatest suspicion.

For the time being, however, all the engaged persons were still too young to marry, and the Emperor, who even in the most complicated situations was not in the habit of losing his optimistic faith in the future, could still continue to devote himself for a number of years to building countless other castles in the air, until the day when the children from Malines and the children from Buda would be able to repeat in person the pledges with which others had sealed their fate.

So far they were only bound by an agreement "*per verba de futuro*", which the Church, the only authority that could unite or separate human lives, regarded as no more than a simple engagement involving few obligations. Maximilian saw that in order to secure the Austro-Hungarian alliance he would have to play a trump card against the growing Hungarian opposition. He conceived the idea of kidnaping Princess Anna from her country, where she ran the risk of being married to Zápolya by the nationalists. An official engagement between Anna and some Habsburg prince must be celebrated, even if Maximilian would have to take on the role of bridegroom himself. For in the winter of 1513, when the Emperor considered that the moment had come to give at least a semblance of reality to his precarious

agreements with Vladislav of Hungary, the same problems presented themselves which in 1507 had made his promises valueless. Having no control over either Prince Charles or Prince Ferdinand, he was still unable to produce a bridegroom for Princess Anna. But Maximilian's imagination once again did not fail him. At least one of his grandchildren could be present in order to stage an imposing demonstration, the pageantry of which would convince all Europe of the fact that Habsburg had again been victorious. In the early spring of 1514 he decided that his granddaughter Mary, now eight years old, should take leave of her Aunt Margaret, her brother Charles and her two sisters, and go to live in Austria. There she would be able to see for herself how much love and honor her grandfather the Emperor wished to bestow on her by giving her in marriage to the seven-year-old son of an ailing, world-weary king, of whom his subjects, in the Emperor's own words, "thought nothing".

CHAPTER THREE

Ceremonies and Bonfires



Oultre plus me semble que ses ceremonies, sollennités et feuz de joye que se font en semblables mariages estonnent plus les enemys que ne font maintes foys les armées et le bruit en va plus loing.

Furthermore, it seems to me that these ceremonies, solemnities and bonfires which are held on the occasion of such marriages, impress the enemy more than armies often do, and the rumor of them reaches further.

Margaret of Austria ¹

THE Emperor's wish that his granddaughter "Madame Marye" should leave the Netherlands in order to continue her education where she would be at his instant call in case of need, suddenly placed this youngest of the children from Malines in the center of interest. Her aunt, Madame de Savoie, was faced with no light task. Where, she asked herself, should she find the money for Madame Marye's journey from Malines to Vienna? At that very moment the Emperor was making renewed demands upon the Burgundian treasury on behalf of his war with the Venetians, and Margaret was obliged to ask her father the painful question, which expenditure was the more urgent, that for the troops, or that for her niece's journey?

Next came the problem of who should accompany the child on this long expedition, and who should finally remain with her in the new residence her grandfather would choose for her. First of all her "bercheresse", Marguerite de Poitiers, who had been with Mary since she was born, was now to follow her, with

husband and children, to Austria. Then, at the Emperor's request, a young woman named Cerf—"une josne damoiselle"—was also to remain with her. The other members of her suite were appointed for the journey only, and would return to the Netherlands, to be replaced by Austrian ladies and gentlemen.

From the list of appointments known to us it is clear that Madame de Savoie surrounded her niece with the complete household considered indispensable to a royal personage in those days. *Chevalier* and *dame d'honneur* with their nobles and ladies in waiting, pages and maids of honor; *maîtres d'hôtel* with their higher and lower assistants, whose task it was to look after kitchen, cellar and table; keepers of the wardrobe, personal maids and washerwomen; equerries and quartermasters, sent ahead when the court was traveling to choose suitable quarters and make the necessary preparations. They all had to be selected and appointed and given detailed instructions concerning their duties. A military escort under the command of Burgundy's greatest general, Floris van Egmond himself, was to look after the safety of the princess and her retinue.

The Emperor had decided that the party should leave on the last day of April, but the departure had to be postponed for two days as the necessary preparations had not been completed. Funds for the expensive journey were supplied by the Estates of Holland, who voted a special subsidy, to the Regent's great satisfaction.² And on May 4th, 1514, Margaret could write to her father that the party had left and that he would be kept informed by the Seigneur de Flagy, Mary's Grand Master, of the condition, conduct and organization of the journey—"l'estat, conduite et gouvernement dudit voyage".³

In slow daily stages the travelers moved from Malines and its lush green meadows towards the hills in the east. Soldierly riders in colorful military dress preceded the comfortable horseborne litter in which the little archduchess with her dame d'honneur would be carried from Malines to Vienna. The other ladies were seated in unwieldy covered wagons, carved and decorated in gay colors. The gentlemen, the officers of the guard, Count Floris himself, surrounded on horseback the slow-moving, creaking vehicles. A long row of heavily laden carts followed with Mary's luggage, with the possessions of those who, like their mistress, were leaving home for good, with the baggage of

the escort, with beds and tapestries and furniture, household articles and provisions. Bright little flags fluttered on lances in the spring breeze. Weapons and armor sparkled. Hounds ran eagerly to and fro. Now and then a swift falcon rose from a gloved hand. For the men made use of their slow journey to hunt, as they went along, whatever ran or flew within reach of their eager dogs and birds.

Yet, especially during the first few days, the journey was not a pleasure ride. There was every reason to fear complications from Duke Charles of Gelre, enemy of Habsburg, to whose domains the party came dangerously near. Count Floris' scouts had reported that the redoubtable duke himself was probably camping not far from their route. He had just returned from France, presumably well provided with troops and money, and had shortly before been seen in Liège, which he seemed to have left again in secret. No one knew better than Floris van Egmond what a valuable hostage Madame Marye would be if she fell into the hands of this enemy of her House. He took no risks in the matter of Mary's safety. By May 5 he wrote to the Regent from Maastricht: ⁴

"Madame, Madame Marie arrived here this evening in excellent health, without having been exposed to any danger during the trip. Tomorrow we journey on to Aix. Apparently there are no troop concentrations or gatherings of people in this neighborhood which might prevent Madame's passage. Madame, the bearer of this message lost his horse on a reconnaissance in the interest of our journey. I beg you, Madame, to receive him kindly and to reward him with another horse."

So the first danger was over. The road to Aix brought Mary into the region where her grandfather's authority was inviolable and where Count Floris had no need to send scouts ahead, but only his quartermasters who were to find comfortable lodgings for his cavalcade.

After Maastricht and Aix the party probably took the easiest road, leading a little way up the Rhine into the heart of the German Empire. The journey must have made a great impression on the eight-year-old child, who knew only the hills around Brussels and now looked every day upon more and more unfamiliar landscapes, saw ever more impressive peaks rise on the horizon. Ancient, gently curving vineyards were followed by sudden crags, from which massive castles looked out over

blue distances of stream and valley. Pale touches of sprouting field and blossoming orchard added color to gentle slopes. Forests, more sombre and ominous than the woods around Brussels, darkened the way or stood along distant hilltops. Small walled towns nestled in narrow valleys, their colorful vine-covered houses huddled close round great churches, whose bells rang out in greeting from afar. Their inhabitants came to meet the Emperor's granddaughter with wine and game, with loyal addresses, music and song, and the little Austrian archduchess, who had always spoken French, heard the first sounds of a new language which she would soon have to learn. That language changed with the landscape, grew warmer and sweeter in tone with the taste of the wine. They were nearing the Habsburg hereditary lands.

On June 12, after six weeks of travel, Mary of Austria made her entry into Vienna.⁵ Clergy and burghers came to meet her in solemn procession and accompanied her to the castle her grandfather had provisionally assigned to her. Mary's luggage, covered with the dust and sand of endless roads, was unloaded. The great journey was over. Unfamiliar rooms were decorated with the tapestries and furniture brought from Malines. Strange faces, incomprehensible words, surrounded the child. Most of her traveling companions soon left the gay city on the Danube to return to the Netherlands. Without the damoiselle de Poitiers and her colleague, the damoiselle Cerf, Mary would have been lonely indeed.

Up till now she had been a child among children, but now she had to be a princess among courtiers and servants. She was no longer safe and protected as in Malines. The world showed a strange and threatening face. The dream which could only have lasted in safe seclusion had been disturbed, and reality, pitiless even to a royal child, forced itself upon Mary's barely awakened consciousness. The long struggle that was to be her life had begun.

No word of complaint has come down to us from these first years of loneliness. But no doubt Mary's experiences must have been only a little less disconsolate than those of her elder sister Ysabeau, whose fate was decided a few months after Mary's departure and who in her turn left the safe haven of the Prinsenhof a year later, to be the bride of King Christian II of Denmark. Ysabeau was fourteen years old when she became queen and

from the misery of her experiences at the court of Denmark she voiced the complaint of many princesses who shared her fate, when on August 7, 1515, she wrote to her "Aunt and kind Mother" in Malines: "Madame, if I could choose for myself I would now be with you. For to be parted from you is the greatest sorrow which can happen to me, especially as I do not know when I may hope to see you again".⁶

Madame de Savoie knew from experience the emptiness and uncertainty, not yet understood but none the less agonizing, the upsetting changes, the inexplicable transitions which had also shaken the years of her own youth. No one was more deeply convinced of the necessity and usefulness of these political marriages; but this view, acquired by long political training, could not altogether silence her uneasiness about the fate of her nieces. She knew enough about conditions in the countries to which they had gone to realize that neither Mary nor Ysabeau could expect a life of love and happiness by the side of the husbands whom the Emperor had selected for them. And though she also knew that she had no power to alter any decision, she nevertheless wished to neglect nothing that might make the lives of her foster children more bearable. Messire Hugues de Bulliaux, Mary's chief equerry, was sent to Buda on a visit to the King of Hungary and the Crown Prince, so that he might report on the disposition, health and quality of the said prince—"à celle fin qu'il sceust rapporter nouvelles de pardeça de la disposition, sancté et qualité dudit prince".⁷

Probably Messire Hugues made his report verbally to Madame de Savoie. We do not know his impressions. But even after a short stay in Buda he must have formed a clear picture, not only of King Vladislav's lack of power and the Crown Prince's delicate health, but also of the appalling poverty which condemned the court of Buda to a thoroughly undignified way of life. It could not have escaped Margaret's envoy how extravagantly the Hungarian magnates, the high officers of the Crown, and especially the all-powerful prelates lived in the palaces surrounding the royal castle, although he may perhaps not have discovered that the luxury exhibited by these ostentatious gentlemen was paid for with funds robbed from the King's treasury. Accustomed to the prosperous, well-kept appearance of the Low Countries, he must have been struck by the spectacle of desolate poverty and neglect which he saw on his way through King

Vladislav's realm. Fields untilled or neglected, farms deserted and derelict, peasants in rags, starving children—a joyless, oppressed, and languishing people. And if he asked for the cause of this general misery, his ears must have rung with the same reply: the taxes! Taxes to the King, taxes to the landlords, taxes to the insatiable Church. Twice a year a goose, a ninth part of the meagre harvest, a considerable part of the wood felled, of the yield of cowshed and chickenyard. Nothing was left to the Hungarian peasant to save him from hunger and privation. His life was worth less than that of the cattle he looked after. Like his toiling, ploughing ox, he was his master's property.⁸

The information the Regent received caused general anxiety and indignation in the Netherlands. Did the Emperor imagine, people murmured, that such a marriage was an honor to the granddaughter of Burgundy's last duchess? The baffling rumors and no less dreadful certainties that reached the Low Countries concerning Ysabeau in Denmark did not tend to improve the feelings at Margaret's court towards the scheming grandfather. Burgundy's pride revolted against a policy which bartered the descendants of the once renowned dukes to rulers who were looked upon as powerless beggars. Regent Margaret conveyed to her father the embittered feelings of her councilors and complained openly about the choices he had made for his two granddaughters.

Little is known about the time Mary spent in the charming city on the Danube where it was pleasant to live and to be free. But in Mary's case there was hardly any question of freedom. She had been lodged in the so-called "Cillierhof", the old palace of the Counts Cilli, situated opposite the castle proper, a sombre square fortress more like an armory than a royal residence.⁹ The Cillierhof was devoid of all elegance and comfort. For half a century the old palace had been used as an arsenal and the smoke and soot of the fires of the adjoining forge and the fierce clatter of steel on steel penetrated to Mary's apartments. A maze of passages and courtyards was used to store rusty abandoned guns. Cannonballs lay stacked against the crumbling walls. Nothing in these medieval surroundings reminded the child from Flanders of the comfortable Prinsenhof or the quiet elegance of the Regent's Malines palace.

The lonely little girl in the inhospitable castle can hardly

have known the pleasures which the gay Austrian capital had to offer. Only from her safely escorted litter will she have seen something of the city between its neat vineyards, of its wide streets in which caged birds sang from every window and balcony, as if one were walking in the Vienna Woods. Yet Mary in her royal isolation shared in her own way in the amenities that had made the city on the Danube renowned all over Europe. The Viennese loved theatrical performances, and perhaps Mary was not too bored with a play called "The Battle between Lust and Virtue", a drama in verse by the very learned abbot Chalidonius, performed for her in 1515, when she was ten years old, in which Venus, Satan and Cupid bickered with Pallas Athene in alternate German and Latin.¹⁰ At any rate, each act was followed by lovely music sung by the court choir, which had learned to imitate the incomparable singing methods practiced in Burgundy. During all the years Mary was to spend in Austria, and particularly during her stay in Vienna, her days were filled with music.

Vienna offered also more material pleasures. It was famous for its cooking, for the variety and refinement of its dishes, its tarts and pastries in the shape of towers and castles, its sugar-pretzels ("Zuckerbretzeln"), its Vienna crabs, its trout and its artichokes. This was an aspect of Viennese life which the Emperor's granddaughter will no doubt have appreciated and which may have reconciled her a little to the absence of so many things she had been familiar with.

Evidently her education was not neglected. In Vienna she learned the German language, which she soon spoke fluently with that charming Austrian accent that is to be recognized from the entirely phonetic writing of her later letters. She was taught the Latin of the humanists whom her grandfather had called to the University, and she learned the ceremonial which ruled the life of an imperial princess. Mary's appearance changed as her tabards of Burgundian design became too small for her. New clothes in the German-Austrian style were made for her, and she exchanged the French cap which formerly had framed her pale narrow face for picturesque velvet hats like those her Viennese ladies in waiting wore.

In the meantime Mary's grandfather contemplated various methods whereby the Habsburg-Hungarian marriage-bonds, which still consisted only of his ambassadors' agreement with King Vladislav, might be strengthened through an engagement

"per verba de praesenti", ratified with solemn vows by the prospective couples in person. Maximilian wanted to hear two bridegrooms and two brides pronounce the marriage formula, which could only be annulled by papal dispensation. But those important words should not be spoken beneath a Hungarian sky. Maximilian decided that the Hungarian children should cross the frontier of their unsafe country in order to make their vows to Habsburg in a place where no Magyar protest could temper their conviction.

In consequence Vienna experienced those exciting weeks of the summer of 1515 when the first Congress of Vienna took place, and Mary of Austria met for the first time the Hungarian Crown Prince for whom she had been destined even before he was born.

On July 17 the Emperor rode into the gaily decorated city with his two guests, Vladislav of Hungary and his brother, King Sigismund of Poland, accompanied by the Hungarian royal children and a following of hundreds of princes, nobles and prelates. Already at the crack of dawn an exotic throng had taken possession of Vienna. From all sides the fast Polish and Hungarian four-in-hands entered the city gates, colorful forerunners of the multitudes approaching the capital. Vienna had spared neither effort nor expense in order to honor the Emperor and had gone in solemn procession to meet its guests. But alas, from early in the morning there fell, clattered and poured over roofs and streets and gardens, over the balconies decorated with flowers and tapestries, an unrelenting, typically Austrian torrential rain. Clattered and poured over the thousands who had come out in their best clothes to enjoy the spectacle of the Emperor's entry into the town. Under such depressing conditions even Maximilian's masterly stage management was unable to save the day. Vienna and the Viennese, the Emperor, the kings, the brilliant retinue, the plumed and befeathered escort, all dripped with rain. Sheets of water dimmed the festive colors, muted the tones of the music, dulled the sparkle of the jewels. The disappointed crowd returned home. The Emperor's guests hastened to remove their soaked velvets, their wet satins, their drooping, weeping feathers. The day was a failure.¹¹

But two days later a reception was held in the "Grosz Tantzhaus", the ballroom of the Vienna castle, which made everyone forget this disappointment.¹² The Emperor sat upon his throne between his two guests and the children from Buda, Anna and

Lajos. Polish and Hungarian nobles, archbishops and bishops filled the hall, everyone waiting for the moment which the imperial producer had marked as the zenith of the day.

The great doors of the "Grosz Tantzhaus" swung open. Princes and dukes, counts, barons, ladies in waiting and maids of honor, chamberlains, officers, pages, entered the hall. But all eyes sought one small figure in the midst of this brilliant throng. And there came Mary, the heroine of all this pomp and glitter. A small, lively girl of nine, in her too-heavy dress of gold brocade. Her pale face with the long Habsburg chin, the pronounced underlip, was dominated by two intensely bright eyes which looked and looked again, and already seemed to understand. Perhaps she was not tall enough for her age, too slight to make an impression. But she was the Emperor's granddaughter and she knew that at this moment she was the center of everyone's attention. This was the moment for which she had been waiting ever since she left Malines. At last she would see the prince who was already anointed, whom they called King.

Mary did not forget for an instant the role which she had to play and which her Grande Maîtresse, Frau von Rottal, had carefully rehearsed with her. Serious and straight, her eyes fastened on her grandfather, she crossed the hall to Maximilian's throne. There she sank humbly down in a deep curtsy before His Imperial Majesty, rose easily, curtsied again at the feet of the King of Poland, of King Vladislav of Hungary, of Princess Anna, of Crown Prince Lajos, who sat motionless and tense on his small royal throne.

A chair had been reserved for Mary at King Vladislav's right side, and after all her curtsies she mounted the dais, without, however, sitting down.

The Provost of Waldkirchen stepped forward and greeted the guests on Mary's behalf in a sonorous Latin speech. And while he spoke and the lofty space of the Tantzhaus echoed with his solemn sentences, Mary's eyes sought again and again the fairytale figure before whom she had just knelt in reverence, Crown Prince Lajos, who was to be her husband.

Sitting upon his gilded chair, he seemed entirely made of gold. A stiff little coat of gold brocade glittering with precious stones gave him the touching dignity of an exotic doll. Long, gold-blond curls fell in silky waves far below his shoulders. On his head he wore a circlet of jewels. With blue-green eyes half-shut in

his rosy face, he stole a look at the pale girl standing in front of her chair at his father's right. In this hall filled with strangers she must have been a comfort to him: a child like himself.

When Mary's representative had finished and had been answered by the Bishop of Przemyśl speaking on behalf of the foreign guests, the official part of the reception was over and the ball could begin. The first group formed: Princess Anna and Prince Lajos with the Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg and the Duke of Mecklenburg, preceded by Counts Mansfelt and Westerburg. In slow, measured steps the dancers moved along, to the thin music of one flute player and one drummer accompanying the group. Each dancer carried a slender, burning torch.

At the second dance it was Mary's turn, and she went through her steps in an irreproachable manner, between the soldierly figures of Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria and the Counts of Hennenberg and Hardeck. And when the third row of torches was formed, the enchanting little Lajos danced with Mary's Grande Maitresse, Frau von Rottal.

The following days were devoted to political conferences between their majesties, to tournaments and banquets. On July 22, four treaties were concluded, in which the Emperor had found a solution for the apparently desperate problem of how to produce a young Habsburg bridegroom to kneel beside Princess Anna before the altar in the cathedral of St. Stephen, which had been prepared for two wedding ceremonies. For a wedding there should be, even though the Austrian princes, Charles and Ferdinand, were not present. The gray-haired Emperor had decided to marry the twelve-year-old Hungarian princess himself, on the same day that her brother was married to his granddaughter Mary. A legal document was drawn up, however, which stated that the marriage contract between Maximilian and Anna of Hungary would become void, if within one year one of the Emperor's grandsons, either Charles of Burgundy, Prince of Spain, or Ferdinand of Austria, should take over the vow *per verba de praesenti*. If this did not happen, Maximilian undertook to raise the Hungarian princess to the imperial throne as his wife within another three months.

Greater glory could scarcely have been bestowed upon Anna. The Emperor had played his last trump card to win the Crown of St. Stephen for the Habsburg dynasty. Anna was now withdrawn for good from the influence of the Hungarian national-

ists. For King Vladislav agreed that his daughter should stay behind in Austria with the proud title of Roman Empress, to become the Emperor's wife in case neither of the Habsburg princes should be available.

It was barely nine o'clock on the morning of that same day when the double wedding procession left the castle for the Cathedral of St. Stephen. The small brides in their stiff gowns of gold brocade entered the church, and the warm light of thousands of candles fell upon them as they took their places under the golden baldachin that canopied the choir. After the high mass, while a speaker vainly tried to make himself heard among the excited voices of the wedding guests, Maximilian withdrew to exchange his jeweled hat and gold brocade tunic for the crown and imperial robes. And thus arrayed, in order to leave no doubt of the dignity to which he was about to elevate Princess Anna, he knelt beside the fair-haired child before the altar, where the Cardinal-Archbishop of Esztergom (Gran), Hungary's first prelate, united them in marriage.¹⁸

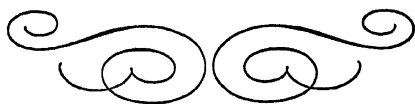
After the splendor of this first wedding no one paid much attention to the next pair which exchanged rings before the altar and received the blessing. Yet Lajos and his bride Mary must have felt themselves the center of that solemn scene in the great church. Their childish voices repeated the stately Latin phrases the Cardinal spoke before them. Perhaps they were still too young to grasp the significance of this moment, which, in their case at least, was no empty spectacle, but was really to unite them, first for years of waiting, separated from each other, and then for a short but happy married life. Each placed a ring on the other's finger. Kneeling, they received the blessing.

The voices of the famous imperial choir started a *Te Deum*, answered by the organ. Once more the bridal procession formed. The princesses, the Emperor, the kings, left the church with its echoing music, its seething crowd. Bells rang out over the city of Vienna.

The dynasties of Austria and Hungary were united.

CHAPTER FOUR

Among Strangers



... car je suis ici long de tous
mes amis, gouvernée par gens
étranges.

... for here I am far from all
my friends, governed by stran-
gers.

Mary to Ferdinand,
Innsbruck, February 28, 1519¹

THAT morning of solemn ceremonies in the Chapel of St. Stephen had provided the climax of the Congress of Vienna, and now more days and nights passed in tournaments, banquets, and balls. After a year of loneliness Mary must have received unforgettable impressions during these weeks in which her so far monotonous existence merged into the festive rhythm of overcrowded days. No longer alone among strangers who were her servants, she was now for the first time since her departure from Malines once more surrounded by equals. She was constantly with her grandfather, the Emperor. She walked side by side with the fair-haired Anna from Buda, who was bigger than she but still a child. And she was often in the company of the little king, her bridegroom, whose wild games she enjoyed sharing more than Anna's quiet girlish amusements. She respected him deeply for his accomplishments in sport and it was a great day for her when they were allowed to "hunt" together in the deer park of the castle, pursuing its stag, doe and chamois with bow and arrow. They killed a chamois and a stag and triumphantly took their spoils to King Vladislav as a present.

Rough games of this kind were entirely after Mary's heart,

though rather than pursuing deer living in captivity she would have loved to chase wild boar or the chamois her grandfather used to hunt in his beloved Tyrol. Princess Anna preferred less strenuous entertainments and enjoyed particularly those evenings in the imperial apartments when after dinner her "bridegroom" laid out piles of gold and silver pieces and started a card game for these valuable stakes. Was it an accident that the three children won the largest number of shining coins bearing the Emperor's effigy? That the Emperor himself seemed unable to win anything, and King Vladislav, radiant at the children's success, only a few goldpieces? Maximilian had made enough gains in Vienna—he could afford to be lavish towards his guests. Cuspinianus, who knew the value of the agreements that had been concluded, estimated his master's outlay for the Congress of Vienna at over 150,000 gold guilders.

To Mary's mind these days ended all too soon. Restless as always, the Emperor was the first to leave Vienna, and his guests accompanied him on his journey to Linz as far as Wiener Neustadt.

The two girls remained behind in Vienna together, Mary from Malines and Anna from Buda, now so confusingly related to one another, Mary married to Anna's brother, Anna—to Mary's grandfather? Or to one of her brothers? The young bride herself did not know, and the world knew just as little. Mary and Anna knew only that in the future they belonged together and together they would have to wait until some further demand should be made upon them.

They continued to live in the chilly old palace where Mary had stayed for a year and where Anna now joined her. They were now "the little queens"—"reginulae"—though those who wished to indicate Anna's superior rank did not fail to use the title of "Empress", which well became her serious behavior. Mary, small for her age, thin and active in a boyish way, was now no longer "Madame Marye" but "Queen of Hungary and Bohemia"—"Kunigin von Hungern und Behaim". The household was enlarged to include a few Hungarian nobles, who, however, gained scarcely any influence among the countless Germans and Austrians with whom the Emperor had surrounded the queens. Jorg von Rottal and his wife remained Grand Maître and Grande Maîtresse, Frau Paula von Firmian became governess to the girls, and Anna was now included in the lessons which

Mary had hitherto attended alone.² The clatter of the arsenal's forges outside the Cillierhof echoed as before; smoke from the forge fires billowed as before over the walls of the old castle.

Months went by. And then, on January 23, 1516, King Ferdinand of Aragon, the other grandfather of the Malines children, who had always opposed a Hungarian marriage for his godchild Don Fernando, died in distant Spain. The problem the Emperor had faced since plighting his troth to Princess Anna of Hungary was solved just in time. By January 29, the Pope granted Archduke Ferdinand a dispensation for the union he wished to enter into with his grandfather's bride; two months later young Ferdinand's plenipotentiaries left Spain to conclude by proxy his marriage with Anna of Hungary. On July 24, 1516, a year after she had knelt beside Maximilian in the Church of St. Stephen, Anna was obliged to renounce her title of Empress which, with her fourteen years, she had so worthily borne. Her relationship to Mary appeared to be settled: they were to be sisters-in-law.

But even before the symbolic ceremony took place, Anna received a blow that seemed to endanger her future all over again. Her father, King Vladislav, died on March 13, and in Hungary the quarrel between the nationalists, who wanted to name Zápolya regent during Lajos' minority, and the supporters of the House of the Jagiello, who wished to see the regency council appointed by Vladislav take over the Government, immediately broke out again.

The comparative quiet that had reigned in Hungary was now a thing of the past. Zápolya and his followers even stormed the castle of Buda in order to get hold of the young king, and there was every reason to fear for the boy's life.³ In the winter of 1516 the Emperor considered conditions in Hungary so dangerous that he no longer thought the princesses safe near the Hungarian border and ordered them to be moved to Innsbruck. A year later he himself brought troops into the field to protect King Lajos—and with him the Habsburg chances for the Hungarian throne—against Zápolya's plans.

In a threatening, uncertain atmosphere Anna and Mary left all-too-accessible Vienna to seek safety among the Alps defending Innsbruck. The wide perspectives of rolling wood-covered hills and glowing vineyards were replaced by a narrow horizon of sharp mountain battlements, and instead of the mild fragrances

of the Vienna woods the little queens now breathed the thin mountain air, in autumn already cooled by the first snows upon the peaks and on warm days redolent of pine and resin.

Innsbruck was a favorite residence of the Emperor-Archduke, who liked it for its mountain hunting, for the opportunity it offered him to ask the Estates of his Upper-Austrian lands for money, and to discuss with the Seusenhofers, the famous armorers, the chiseling of some newly forged suit of armor. It had already experienced his restless, often abruptly ended visits, when the narrow streets and alleys round the archducal castle would be filled with a cosmopolitan crowd. And the Innsbruck innkeepers had experiences of their own, for sometimes they had been obliged to wait for years to be paid for what the imperial courtiers had consumed in board and lodging. Still, they would not have liked to see His Majesty prefer another city. The court contracted debts, but in time these would be settled. It brought life and business to the factories and shops, and the inns never had enough beds, for the castle was not large, and ambassadors and generals and high prelates who followed the Emperor on his wanderings often had to be put up in burghers' houses. The Innsbruckers had no objection to the little queens coming to live in their city, bringing their double household, apart from the government offices, which conducted local affairs in the name of the frequently absent ruler.

The Emperor did his utmost to make the little queens feel at home in their new surroundings. He remembered that he still had two costly pieces of jewelry which his children in Innsbruck might wear as pendants or as ornaments on their bonnets.⁴ But alas, these pieces had been pawned to the Fuggers and a thousand gold ducats were needed to redeem them. "Maximilian the penniless", as a sarcastic Italian called him, rarely had so much ready money, and he therefore sought assistance from the Innsbruck treasury, which—in consequence of a loan on copper—was still owed some money by the Fuggers. But however gladly the authorities would have obliged the Emperor, the thousand ducats could not be spared. The amount still due on the copper was assigned to other purposes, their lordships wrote, and how did the Emperor expect them to finance the double household of the queens if they ran up further debts?

Yet Maximilian was very anxious to please the lonely princesses. Did they already possess one of these big velvet hats which

the fashionable German ladies had been wearing recently? One was designed for Mary first, and when it appeared that Anna envied her small sister-in-law this elegant headgear, sparkling with a fortune in gold and jewels, one of Maximilian's courtiers came to assure her that the Emperor would give her, too, the materials for a similar exquisite hat.⁵ As always, the Emperor showed the greatest interest in the details of his fashionable gifts. He asked for a drawing of the model made for Mary, with an exact list of the number and size of the rubies, diamonds and pearls worked into the trimming. Little Anna was so delighted at the sight of so much beauty that she asked the Emperor most urgently to let her have her hat as quickly as possible. Apparently Mary was also overjoyed with her grandfather's expensive present. For when Maximilian discovered that there still remained among the objects he had inherited from his last wife, Bianca Maria Sforza, a hat embroidered with pearls—"ein perlein huet"—he felt he could give no one greater pleasure with it than his granddaughter in Innsbruck.⁶ A condition, alas, attached to this gift. The Emperor had planned to use Bianca Maria's jewels for pious purposes, and Mary was able to wear this very worldly headdress of her step-grandmother only in exchange for the endowment of a Mass for the peace of its former possessor's soul.

Mary and Anna are wearing extraordinary hats just like these in the portraits Hans Maler painted of them in Innsbruck, in 1519 for the collection of Margaret of Austria, in 1520 probably for their bridegrooms.⁷ Mary in particular wears her magnificent headgear and her stiff, monumental dress with true elegance. The still childish narrow face does not yet show the fine features that make it so attractive in the touching portrait painted by Hans Krell a few years later (see illustration). The expression in this earlier picture is still dreamy, the lines and curves soft and blurred. It is the face of a thoughtful child; it already bears the mark of proud nobility and it shows, almost more clearly than any portrait of male members of the House of Habsburg, the limitless pride which laid claim to world power.

The portrait of Anna at sixteen, with her comely but insignificant face, shows her as she was to appear in all her later pictures: a somewhat bashful, serious young woman, kind and a little worried, stiff in her showy dress, loyal and faithful, but

lacking entirely the cool self-assurance, the noble distinction of bearing and gesture, which in Mary's youthful portrait are the unmistakable signs of later greatness.

So the years passed in the quiet provincial town Innsbruck still remained, though it had become the residence of two queens and the seat of government of Upper Austria. Sometimes a foreign ambassador, on his way to overtake His Majesty the Emperor on one of his bizarre peregrinations, came to pay his compliments to the little queens, and one of the most astute observers Europe possessed in those days, the Venetian ambassador Gasparo Contarini, reported to his government that the lean, sharp little Habsburg princess already at that time was said to possess great intelligence and to be a woman of importance.⁸

The future proved that the perspicacious ambassador had been right, even though the years of Mary's sojourn in Innsbruck were filled for the most part with the small concerns of a secure young girlhood. It was always her grandfather who brought variety into her rather dull life, in which his short visits were so many unforgettable moments. They meant not only balls and banquets in the castle, theatrical performances and "Mummereien", but also exciting hunting parties, and Mary could enjoy to her heart's content the sport that was also the Emperor's favorite relaxation.

When her grandfather visited her in the autumn of 1518, however, it could not have escaped Mary that he was no longer the tireless sportsman she had always known. Maximilian was evidently ill, and although his indomitable spirit might still sparkle with gaiety and humor, those who knew him well could not fail to see that the gray, furrowed face of the Emperor betrayed a serious ailment. He had not made this last journey from the Empire to his hereditary lands on horseback but had come by litter or, where possible, by ship. It was clear that the old conjuror, who had for so long waved the magic wand of his imagination over the fate of Europe, would not be able to exercise his fascinating art much longer.

Annoying developments awaited him in Innsbruck. Though he had given the necessary orders long ago, the debts contracted by his court in the inns of the city on his last visit had apparently

not yet been settled, and Maximilian discovered to his humiliation that the innkeepers refused to take in his courtiers unless the outstanding sums were immediately paid.

Mortally ill, the Emperor left the ungrateful city for the small Austrian town of Wels, and soon his entourage realized that the life-journey of this restless wanderer had come to an end. In deep secrecy famous doctors were brought from Vienna. But they were powerless. The only relief the Emperor found was in conversation with his chaplains and the sound of penitential psalms. Early in the morning of January 12, 1519, he breathed his last. The world was poorer for his going, poorer in playful fantasy and charming irresponsibility, in brilliant prophetic gifts and engaging untrustworthiness. Before any of those who had loved the Emperor, Mary in Innsbruck heard the sad news which made her lonelier than ever. She had lost the protector from whom she believed she had received only love and respect all her life. Never again would she feel safe in the care of the highest ruler of Christendom, her beloved grandfather.

From everywhere letters of sympathy reached her, pointing out to her that she should accept God's will. She herself, together with Anna, wrote in the same pious spirit a solemn letter to her aunt, Regent Margaret; a letter in the cold Latin of royal chanceries, in which they addressed her as "*Serenissima princeps et domina ac mater nostra amantissima*," and to which even their own signatures—"Dedite filie Anna regina, manu propria, Maria regina, manu propria"—could lend no human warmth.⁹

What her grandfather's death really meant to Mary may be guessed from a few shy words she sent about a month later to her brother Ferdinand, Anna's bridegroom, to whom they both at that moment in their lives looked for comfort. Mary had never yet met this brother, a year and a half her senior, who had been born and brought up in Spain, and they had not one memory in common. But being Anna's bridegroom, he might soon come to Austria to take her fate into his hands and watch over her, as until now her grandfather had done. To this unknown brother Mary, now fourteen, wrote:

* "*Monseigneur my good brother, I commend myself humbly*

* "*Monseigneur mon bon frère, humblement à vostre bonne grace me recommande. Monseigneur, j'ai tout perdu au trespas de l'empereur, nostre bon seigneur et grand-pere, à qui nostre seigneur par sa grace veille estre misericors, que ne le vous sauroit assez complaindre a cause qu'il m'a tous-*

to your grace. Monseigneur, I have lost everything by the death of the emperor, our good lord and grandfather, to whom may our Lord by his grace be merciful, so that I cannot sufficiently express my grief to you because he always showed me so much love and honor. In any case, aware that we cannot know the good will of our Lord, one must have patience, and I take comfort in the Catholic king, our good lord and brother [Charles], and you, begging you affectionately that you will always hold me in esteem and deal with me as our said grandfather always did, since all my faith is in you and that you will always hold me for your good and loyal sister, as I am and wish to remain all my life, assuring you that were it not for the hope and confidence I have in you two as my good lords and brothers, I should be the most desolate lady in the world, as you may well consider, for here I am far from all my friends, governed by strangers.

"Meanwhile, Monseigneur, if there is any pleasure or service I can do you, I will do them according to my power with the help of God, to whom, monseigneur, my good brother, I pray he may grant you a good life and long, and accomplishment of all your desires. Your good and loyal sister forever, Marie." ¹⁰

"The most desolate lady in the world." This first letter preserved to us in Mary's hand, this cry of distress, is at the same time a credo to which she was to remain faithful all her life. In these hours when her main support had fallen away, the deserted child seems to have become aware that only the link with her nearest relations could protect her from utter loneliness. In her letter to her aunt Margaret, whose picture must have been

jours montré tant d'amour et d'oneur. Toutesfois, sachans que nous ne pouons connoître le bon vouloir de nostre seigneur, il en faut avoir la patience, et me reconforte au roi Catholique [her brother Charles], nostre bon seigneur et frere, et en vous, en vous priant affectueusement que me veuilliez avoir tousjours pour recommandé et me faire, comme nostred. Grand-pere m'a tousjours fait, comme en vous ai ma totale fiance et que me voulliez toujours tenir pour vostre bonne et lealle soeur, telle que je suis et veulx demeurer toute ma vie, en vous asseurant que ce n'estoit l'espoir et fiance que j'ai en vous deux comme en mes deux beaux seurs et freres, que je seroie la plus desolée dame du monde, comme vous même poez considerer, car je suis ici long de tous mes amis, gouvernée par gens estranges.

"Atant, Monseigneur, s'il i a plaisir ou service que vous puisse faire, je les ferai en mon pouvoir à l'aide de dieu, auquel monseigneur, mon bon frere, je prie qu'il vous doint bonne vie et longue, et accomplissement de tous vos desirs. Vostre bonne et lealle seur à jamais, Marie."

dimmed by five years of separation, but who was still her "much loved mother," she had written in Latin, only her signature being in her own hand. But to her brother Ferdinand she addressed herself in the language of her childhood. Expressions of personal feelings are rare in the correspondence between members of the House of Habsburg at this time. They knew themselves bearers of power by the grace of God, representatives of a superhuman authority, and they took care not to confide to paper their human hesitations and weaknesses, their joys and sorrows, for paper would endure and in the end betray them. But at times life is too bitter for one Habsburg to maintain towards another the pretence of invulnerability. "For I am far from all my friends, governed by strange people." Mary seldom showed her feelings so clearly, and seldom did she use such a personal tone as in this unhappy girlhood letter to her unknown brother.

The promise to be a "good and loyal sister," and to serve her brother with God's help to the best of her ability, Mary kept. She did for her brothers what lay within her power to the last moment of her life. Even when she knew the task to be beyond her and her utmost exertion to be in vain, even then she persevered with incomparable courage. Her wish to be loyal became the sum and substance of her entire life of devotion and self-denial.

Maximilian's death flung Europe into a whirlpool of complications and intrigues. The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation had lost its leader and as yet the Electors had not, as was customary, indicated the successor who should take over crown and scepter, orb and sword. For Maximilian had never managed to make the journey to Rome, had never received from the hands of the Holy Father himself the crown that would really have made him Emperor, and had had to be content to bear the title of Roman Emperor Elect.¹¹

This fact had not prevented him, however, from doing business in various directions and from bartering the future choice of the Electors, which he was not in a position to assure, against large sums of money or important political concessions. In the happy prospect of a future imperial title the vain young Henry VIII of England had loaned him great sums of money, and King Vladislav of Hungary had confided Princess Anna to him,

while Maximilian's ultimate intention remained unaltered: to keep the highest dignity of Christendom for the Habsburg dynasty.

Despite his various contradictory promises he had actually succeeded in obtaining at the Diet of Augsburg in 1518 the written assurance of five out of the seven Electors that they would elect no one else but his eldest grandson, Charles, as King of the Romans. He had not managed, however, to realize this promise immediately. It was impossible at the moment to have available in cash the enormous sums he had promised to the Electors, and the gentlemen would not accept bills of exchange, especially as Francis I of France was promising ready money if they would elect not Charles but himself to the imperial throne. All Europe was asking itself whether the Electors would let themselves be persuaded to appoint, next to the uncrowned Emperor, a King of the Romans to be his successor, when Maximilian's death caused a totally new situation and brought new candidates for the imperial dignity into the arena. Both Henry VIII and the regency council who acted for Lajos of Hungary remembered the Emperor's promises. The moment had now come to assert dearly bought rights. And both Henry and the Hungarian regents joined the fight against the most prominent candidate, for whom Maximilian seemed to have won the victory a year and a half before: Mary's brother, Duke Charles of Burgundy, Archduke of Austria, King of Aragon and Castile, of Naples and Sicily.

During these tense days Charles was far away in Spain. His aunt Margaret, since his departure from the Netherlands once more regent of the Burgundian provinces, now placed her great political experience and her clearheaded practical insight at the service of his future. Margaret directed the first arrows of her diplomatic genius primarily against the hereditary enemy of Burgundy and Habsburg, the brilliant and charming Francis I of France. But the Pope too, Leo X, was a determined opponent of Charles of Spain. Naples and Sicily were already in the hands of the young Habsburg prince, and the Pope was well aware that only forty miles separated the Neapolitan domain from the Holy City, so that any increase in the power of the Catholic King meant a threat to the Holy See. The evident fact that the young and pious Charles was the indicated protector of the Christian Church, the only one who could defend her

against the Reformation as well as against Islam, carried no weight with the Pope. Leo's greatest concerns were for the House of the Medici, to which he belonged, and for his own temporal power. From this point of view an increase in the strength of France would also constitute a serious threat, and Leo's diplomacy in these days was directed towards the choice of some rival candidate to both Francis I and Charles. He felt the most advantageous solution would lie in choosing one of the Electors, preferably the Elector of Saxony, to be Emperor. Yet this conviction did not prevent him from supporting the French candidature also if immediate advantages for the Medici could be expected from it.

In the castle at Innsbruck these international political disturbances brought trouble to the little queens, whose interests, for many years intertwined in a double way, now seemed to come into painful collision. More than that: through these happenings the future they had been waiting for since their two marriage contracts were sealed at the Congress of Vienna seemed to lose every trace of reality. Already, a few months after Maximilian's death, Regent Margaret's secretary, Marnix, who acted as the main agent for Charles's candidature, informed his mistress that King Lajos of Hungary had decided to demand of the Habsburgs the return of his sister Anna, since her marriage with Ferdinand had not yet materialized.¹² Furthermore Lajos claimed the enormous sum Maximilian had promised in reparation should he not adhere to the agreement, to cover which the Emperor had pledged practically all his jewels. If the Hungarian demands were not conceded, Lajos threatened that he would resort to force to procure justice.

Margaret's secretary suspected that Charles's rivals, the King of France and the Elector of Saxony, had induced the youthful Lajos to this inimical action. After all, Lajos too was competing for the imperial crown, and, moreover, as King of Bohemia he was a member of the Electoral College. Mary's husband-to-be had entered the arena against her brother Charles, and threatened to deprive her brother Ferdinand of his bride.

Other even more serious complications might arise. If Francis felt his own chances to be but slight, he might decide to support the candidature of Lajos of Hungary. In that case Maximilian's grandson-in-law would probably break with his Habsburg rival completely, and Charles' ambassador, Andrea da Burgo,

feared that Lajos would not only demand the return of his sister, but would also get rid of his own bride, Mary. We may assume that the little queens at Innsbruck were aware of these plans which would mean a total change in their lives. Rumors have come down to us of some disagreement between the two princesses themselves at this time,¹³ and Margaret's secretary felt he should advise his mistress to influence Princess Anna in favor of Habsburg by pointing out to her that she would risk her future happiness if she yielded to her brother's demands. What would become of her, Marnix wanted to ask her, if she did so? She would be married off to some insignificant potentate—the King of Navarre, or a relative of one of the Electors.¹⁴ Whereas if she refused to break her word, she might expect a glorious future as the wife either of Charles, who would become Emperor, or of Ferdinand, who would certainly be chosen King of the Romans and in his turn would wear the imperial crown.

But Margaret of Austria knew only too well from her own experience that if two royal brothers were competing for a crown the wishes of a sixteen-year-old girl did not count. She knew a better way to avert the dangers that threatened her father's work, the Habsburg-Hungarian union. Maximilian's former ambassador Cuspinianus, who had originally brought about the agreement and who knew the Hungarian situation better than anyone else, travelled to Buda by order of the Regent, provided with ample funds. He knew which magnates wanted the imperial crown for their young king and what personal advantages they expected if their plans succeeded. Why should they not enjoy these advantages immediately? Cuspinianus conferred—giving proof in hard cash of the good will of King Charles and Regent Margaret toward King Lajos' councilors.

They changed their minds completely. Their ruler, as King of Bohemia, should vote for the candidate who was the obvious leader to defend Christendom against its worst enemies, the Turks, who once more threatened to overrun Hungary. Habsburg's best friend at the court of Buda, Margrave George of Brandenburg, one of Lajos' three guardians, was dispatched to Frankfort to represent his young master at the election. Cuspinianus' mission to Hungary had succeeded.

The danger of Mary losing her bridegroom seemed indeed to be over. But the little queens knew that Lajos had promised his vote to Charles on condition that Charles, if he won, would

marry Princess Anna. If Lajos gave up his claims, his sister at least should wear the imperial crown.

But when the Margrave of Brandenburg reported to Buda on Charles' victory, his message did not mention the marriage which should make Lajos' sister Empress.¹⁵ As a faithful follower of Habsburg, he had failed to emphasize this essential point. Once more Burgundian diplomacy had triumphed. The Bohemian vote had been bought but was not paid for, and all the protests Lajos addressed to the imperial representatives through a special ambassador were ignored by Charles, who sheltered behind the necessity of having to seek papal dispensation for breaking his engagement to the barely four-year-old Princess Renée of France. Why should he, the newly elected Ruler of Christendom, give his hand to a princess whose lands could become the possession of his House just as well by other means?

Though he had first insisted on Charles himself as husband for his sister, a year later fear of the Turks compelled Lajos to accept Ferdinand, provided Ferdinand received at least the whole of Austria from the Habsburg inheritance. Only on this condition, Lajos declared, would he consent to ratify anew his own marriage agreement with Mary.

Charles V understood that he must now meet the Hungarian demands if he did not wish to lose the results of years of negotiation. In November 1520, shortly after his coronation at Aix, a treaty was drawn up at Cologne between the Emperor and Lajos' ambassadors. Charles stated on this occasion that various political complications prevented him from marrying the Hungarian princess himself, and that therefore he agreed to the marriage alliance which Ferdinand had already contracted in 1516. Wilhelm von Roggendorf, Siegmund von Dietrichstein, and the Provost of Brixen were appointed to represent the Emperor at the wedding of his sister Mary with the King of Hungary, receiving at the same time Ferdinand's power of attorney for his marriage by proxy to Anna of Hungary.

The quiet time in Innsbruck was over. Preparations were started for a worthy reception of the ambassadors from the Empire and from Buda. Frau von Rottal consulted the white parchment "*inventaripuech*" (inventory book) in which throughout all these years she had noted down the princesses' "*clainet, claiden und silbergeschirr*" (jewelry, clothing, and silver plate).¹⁶ Mary had outgrown all her clothes, and if fashionable dresses

were ordered for her, Anna, now nearly eighteen and fully grown up, would certainly not be content with her old wardrobe. This meant a press of work for the court tailors—and enormous expense for the Innsbruck authorities. For each gala dress represented a fortune in costly materials, gold and silver thread, pearls and precious stones. Mary's tailor, Meister Sixt, was busy day and night with his assistant, cutting velvet and gold brocade, pleating sheer muslin, ordering the finest embroidery. Shoemakers and jewelers went to work, the silver room was checked—little-used dishes, pitchers and goblets were polished, and the "*trinkgeschirr zwifach und vergült für der Königin mund*"—drinking vessels in duplicate and gilded for the Queen's mouth—were brought out to serve at banquets. The beds of state to be used at the symbolic wedding ceremony were decorated with particular care. The whole of Innsbruck shared in the activities and anticipated with pleasure the arrival of the distinguished wedding guests and the extra earnings they would bring.

December 11, 1520, was the great day. Wilhelm von Roggen-dorf, Archduke Ferdinand's representative, and Count Ambrus Sárkány, plenipotentiary of King Lajos, arrived in Innsbruck at the same time. The ambassadors of Mary's future husband displayed an almost barbaric luxury. In their satin garments the Hungarian nobles looked like their mortal enemies, the Turks.¹⁷ Waving plumes, gold- and silver-mounted, jewel-studded daggers emphasized the outlandish appearance of the Magyars, whose blue-black hair and fiery dark eyes made them conspicuous among the German and Austrian courtiers. The only official words they addressed to Mary in broken Latin with unusual accents were practically incomprehensible to her, accustomed as she was to the Latin of the Austrian humanists. She must have listened with awe to their unfamiliar language, with its strange, cutting rhythm, unable to distinguish a single word in the cascade of sound. This was the language of her future subjects.

The entire day was filled with religious and secular ceremonies. The two marriages were blessed anew in the little church of St. Jacob, and rings were exchanged between the young queens and their husbands' representatives.¹⁸ In the evening, after a brilliant ball, the symbolic ceremony took place, in which the brides lay down for a few moments upon the beds of state covered with gold brocade, in the room filled with a scintillating com-

pany, while their bridegrooms' ambassadors in their gleaming satins, with one leg bared, stretched out at their sides to indicate that the marriages had taken place.¹⁹

Soon the court of Innsbruck received detailed instructions from the Emperor concerning the prospective departure of the queens, who were to move to a still unknown destination with "Silberkammer" and "Tappesserei", "Marstal" and "Wagenstal" (horses and carriages)—in short, with all their belongings. New inventories were drawn up, carpets and coverings, chairs and pillows were registered, the blankets and bolsters of the traveling beds—"ain vergülts und ain slechts" (one gilded and one plain)—were counted and written down, saddlery and horseblankets were checked, put in order and added to, litters and traveling carriages were repaired, newly gilded, and where necessary provided with new blankets and cushions.²⁰ From Augsburg and even from the Netherlands tapestries and rugs were sent to complete the queens' households. Countless Innsbruck artisans were at work, pewterers and painters, cabinetmakers and bronzecasters ("Bildgiesser") delivered their products to the palace.²¹ Even Mary's books were gone through, and a precious volume bound in velvet was quickly mounted anew with gold for her journey.

Meanwhile couriers went to and fro between Buda and Worms, where Charles V was holding his first Diet. Whither should the queens travel, where meet their prospective husbands? The Emperor wished to see his sister's husband in Innsbruck in the first week of March. But a new threat by the Turks to Hungary's borders prevented Lajos from leaving the country, while endless disputes between the Emperor and the Estates hopelessly delayed the Diet in Worms.

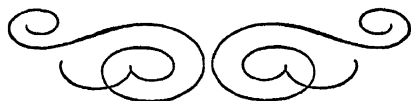
News reached the young brides in Innsbruck that the Emperor had renounced the idea of being present at their marriages and that they should wait for Archduke Ferdinand in Linz on the Danube. As for Mary, she would have to go on alone to her husband's threatened country, and no Habsburg relatives would witness her meeting with the young ruler destined to be her husband even before he was born. Once more she must begin a new phase of her life far from all her friends and governed by strangers.

Snow-covered peaks glittered and sparkled against the Tyrolean spring sky when early in May 1521, Anna from Buda and Mary

from Malines left the town on the Inn where they had lived and waited together for almost five years. Slowly the royal travelers rode along the bank of the Danube, which outside the city turns towards the East. The mountain scenery shifted and closed in to hide the towers and battlements of Innsbruck from their view. A new chapter was beginning.

CHAPTER FIVE

World in Arms



Et cussi hore una post meridiem
face la soa intrata, la terra tutta
in arme.

And thus at one o'clock of the
afternoon she made her entry, the
whole world being in arms.

Lorenzo Orio to the
Venetian government ¹

THE Danube. Artery of a world divided against itself, tragic stream which never reaches its aim of binding what is by nature separate, of uniting what is not destined to live in harmony.

Through the centuries peoples and cultures had met along its broad and silvery course, seeking and repelling each other, needing and rejecting each other. Along the Danube, benevolent mediator, the German spirit had found its way to the land of the Hungarians, who first had summoned it, thereafter came to loathe it. It was the Danube which brought Christianity to the Magyars when King Stephen I desired it for his people, and by the same route the country received its system of government, borrowed by Stephen from German institutions.² German colonists populated Hungarian cities with an industrious middle class which maintained its solid and sober habits and customs, its language and character among the adventurous Hungarians. Even the royal residence Ofen, called Buda by the Magyars, was originally a German city. Germans exploited the rich mining regions of the Carpathians. They became prosperous and wealthy in the country in which they settled. Wealthy and powerful. Powerful and hated. The Hungarians learned to abhor what-

ever came to them from the West along the calm, easily navigable waters of this great river that was both a blessing and a danger, a source of prosperity and of dissension—the Danube.

It was in the city of Linz, on the banks of this same river which would soon take her to Hungary, that Mary, in the company of her sister-in-law Anna, awaited the arrival of her brother, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria.

Ferdinand's journey through Germany and the Austrian lands had been a triumphal march. For at the Diet in Worms, which he had just left, his brother the Emperor had appointed him Governor of the Empire. And more than that. While before he had been merely "Don Fernando", the Emperor's second grandson and brother to the King of Spain, now he had at last achieved a place of his own in the European order. When Emperor Maximilian's inheritance was divided, Charles had made an arrangement with his brother by which the hereditary Austrian lands were to go to Ferdinand alone; and it was as an independent ruling prince that Ferdinand had crossed the Austrian border to be received in Linz by the burghers, and by his bride Anna and his sister Mary.

On that May day in the year 1521 they stood face to face for the first time, the brother from Spain and the sister from the Netherlands. Joy and emotion seized them as they recognized themselves in each other. The same soft blond hair framed the same narrow face with intelligent, somewhat prominent eyes. Their fair complexion, the fine long nose, but particularly the unmistakable Habsburg mouth with the thick, protruding underlip marked them with such a striking likeness that despite almost two years' difference in age they seemed to be twins. They smiled at each other, they kissed. They need have no doubt that they were of the same blood. They knew at a glance that they were brother and sister, and became immediately attached to one another.

The days that followed, when Linz celebrated the wedding of the attractive young archduke to the blond Hungarian Anna, brought to light the likeness between Ferdinand and Mary, which was not only physical, but sprang from the same qualities of mind and the same approach to life and its problems. Though born and brought up in Spain, Ferdinand seemed to possess not a single Spanish trait. Like Mary, and in contrast to their slow

and silent brother Charles, he was rather the child of the lively and charming Duke Philip the Handsome, the grandchild of the uninhibited Emperor Maximilian with his inexhaustible interest in people, creatures, and things. Everything life had to offer to a young and hopeful man was a source of joy to Ferdinand: love and beauty, knowledge and power, wisdom, piety, and chivalry. He was eighteen years old, strong, a sportsman and eager to do great deeds. And now the spring of this year had brought him his first task and a bride, and a sister who was ready to be of service to him.

He had intended to accompany Mary from Linz to Vienna, and thence to the Hungarian border where King Lajos would take her under his care. But already he had to learn that a ruler seldom disposes of his own life and often enjoys less freedom than the least of his subjects. His Austrian lands, having in recent years lacked a strong hand to rule them, were in revolt against the Habsburg authorities; and in the Tyrol, where stag and boar had been allowed to ruin crops in order that the Emperor might have abundant sport, the farmers now took revenge on the animals which, they said, he had bequeathed to them on his deathbed. Poachers became robbers, robbers murderers.³ Anarchy reigned in the once so pleasant villages and towns. Under these circumstances the Archduke, who had come to take over the Government, could not leave his post. His sister Mary had to part with her new-found brother and undertake her journey alone.

She boarded the ship which would bring her to Hungary in a few days. She had two most agreeable traveling companions, the representatives of her brother the Emperor: the young and charming Bishop Bernhard of Cles, who hoped for a career in the service of Habsburg, and the good-natured ambassador, Andrea da Burgo.⁴ Then there were also her husband's ambassador, the elegant Count Ambrus Sárkány, who had played the role of bridegroom in the symbolic wedding ceremony at Innsbruck, the somewhat flippant but amusing Venetian humanist, Hieronymus Balbi, the Bishop of Pécs (Fünfkirchen) and, last but not least, Lajos' guardian and military tutor, Margrave George of Brandenburg.

Mary had already met the attractive, robust Margrave at Vienna, when he had accompanied Crown Prince Lajos to the

meeting of the three rulers. She was then still a child and did not appreciate the position this German nobleman held at the court of Buda. But now, though not yet sixteen, she was soon to be Queen of Hungary, and she knew that the Margrave could be a support to her in the coming years, just as he was a fatherly friend to her husband, King Lajos.

She had every reason to be glad of such an ally in the struggle that awaited her. Brandenburg was a powerful man.⁵ His mother was sister to King Vladislav of Hungary, and as the Hungarian treasury had, in the course of twenty-five years, never been rich enough to pay her dowry, Vladislav had proposed that one of her sons should come to Hungary to receive this debt in hand. George was twenty-one when in 1505 he joined the court of Buda, where his kind-hearted uncle Vladislav did everything to give him a brilliant position. The King loaded him with possessions, even adopted him as his son, and furthermore arranged a marriage between the promising and charming George and one of the wealthiest heiresses in Hungary—none other than the widow of King Matthias' natural son, János Corvinus. Life seemed to smile on Brandenburg in every respect. He had no need to regret the fact that his mother had had to wait a quarter of a century for her dowry. His marriage had made him one of the most powerful landowners in Hungary, and his position at court as the king's nephew and adopted son had been further strengthened by his appointment as tutor to Crown Prince Lajos, whose military education was entrusted to him. There was only one discordant note: he encountered the fierce enmity of the Zápolya family, who perhaps saw in him, the husband of Corvinus' widow, a rival to the Hungarian throne.

Margrave George proved not only the faithful servant of his uncle, King Vladislav, and of his nephew and pupil, Lajos. His warm heart knew yet another loyalty: the traditional loyalty of his family to the House of Habsburg. His rapid and brilliant career had provided Maximilian with an invaluable collaborator at the court of his vacillating ally, Vladislav. It was thanks to Brandenburg's influence that Princess Anna had remained behind in Vienna in 1515; and it was Brandenburg who a few years later had cast Lajos' vote for Charles of Habsburg. Mary could have wished for no better friend, now that she found herself alone and inexperienced on her way to a foreign and

hostile country; and furthermore he was a most engaging cavalier, an intelligent and entertaining talker, who took a great deal of trouble to convince the young queen of his devotion.

So the Danube bore her eastward, from Linz to Vienna, from Vienna to the Hungarian border. She was the fated bride, the future queen who would soon make her influence felt upon the lives of those who now surrounded her with their admiration, their assurances of humble readiness to serve. Silently her ship glided along with the smooth sunlit waters of the river, passing castles and small villages. Everything breathed peace. She had friends about her, honor and affection were bestowed upon her. And within a few days there would be the meeting with her young bridegroom, about whom Margrave George had so many good things to say, her entry into her first Hungarian city, her coronation in the city of Székesfehérvár (Stuhlweissenburg), her arrival in Buda, in the palace where she would reign and be happy.

Sailing down the Danube in her regally decorated craft, surrounded by the small circle of her new courtiers, Mary lived the last hours of her childhood, dreamed her last dream of peaceful contentment. The water bore her unnoticed across the Hungarian border. She was nearing Bratislava, where Lajos awaited her.

But everything was different from what she had imagined.

Messengers from the King had arrived at Bratislava with the appalling news that extreme danger threatened Hungary.⁶ The Great Turk, Suleiman II, was approaching the border with picked troops, after the tribute he had demanded of Hungary had been refused. Wild confusion reigned in the country. The king could not leave Buda. Belgrade and Szábács were threatened, the two strongest fortresses, indispensable to the country's safety, and they were neglected, defenceless. A council of war was held in the capital. There were disputes. There was no money—such a total lack of it, indeed, that the crews of the Danube flotilla, who had had no pay for three years and lived by looting, refused to serve any longer and had dispersed, taking their ships with them.

The king begged his bride not to continue her journey to Buda under these circumstances, but to wait in Bratislava until she could be escorted to the coronation city. In Bratislava she would be safe. She only needed to have patience.

In these her first moments upon Hungarian soil, Mary, expect-

ing homage and expressions of joy, found only fear and uncertainty. She had come face to face with the reality of her future. But she did not need days of weeping and inward struggle to choose her path and to show who she was. Indignantly she refused the King's request that she should stay in Bratislava. For years she had borne the title of Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, had waited for the moment which should unite her with her husband. Now that king and country were in danger, should she stand aside, to continue in safety her endless waiting? Her place was at the side of the King her bridegroom, upon whose head disaster had descended. She demanded to be taken to him without delay. She not only demanded: she gave the order. She was fifteen. But she was Queen of Hungary and she spoke with the authority of one to whom command comes naturally.

The messengers traveled back to Buda, returned again with the suggestion from the King and his council that Mary should proceed to Esztergom, where her husband could visit her, or, if she did not wish to do so, to Visegrád. But they found the proud child absolutely determined. Her husband was at Buda. To Buda she wished to be escorted immediately. Consternation at such self-assurance seized the barons. The Venetian ambassador did not fail to appreciate the significance of this new tone he thought he detected amidst the Magyar cacophony. At least, he thought it worth while to report to his government what confusion this determined child had wrought.⁷

Was it really to protect Mary from danger that her husband's advisers opposed her coming to Buda? Was it not rather the wish of the anti-Habsburg magnates to postpone the King's highly unpopular Austrian marriage as long as possible—to put it off for good, perhaps? Once the Princess with her German following had been received in Buda, would it still be possible to withdraw from this union that would strengthen the Habsburg power in Hungary in a disastrous manner?

But the barons' opposition collapsed, and what Mary wanted happened. She had won her first battle against still-unknown enemies. She boarded her royal ship once more and once more watched the green banks of the Danube gliding by under the burning light of summer. But no longer was she surrounded by a dream of undisturbed happiness. She would have to be vigilant and ready to fight, determined and strong, if she wished to gain her end. And she asked nothing better of life, now that she

suspected the enmity which awaited her and which she was approaching with every stroke of her rowers' oars.

On the right bank of the Danube higher hills began to rise, covered with woods. The eye could already distinguish towers and battlements, the angular outlines of a castle. They were nearing Buda, the royal residence, and Mary left her ship to make the last part of her journey on horseback.

A few miles outside the city walls two royal cavalcades met. For Lajos had come to meet his bride, surrounded by the very barons and princes of the church who had vainly attempted to foil his marriage. Now they treated Mary as their queen, overshadowing in their satins and furs a modest, smiling youth—King Lajos.

Lajos was just over fifteen, but he was big for his age and strongly built.⁸ He no longer resembled the delicate little prince Mary had met in Vienna. Brandenburg might well be proud of the results of his education. Lajos had become a young athlete and one could see that he was accustomed to handle the heavy lance and to control with strong knees the small, nervous horses of the puszta. His kindly boyish face, with the rather broad nose and the beginnings of a reddish growth of beard, beamed at Mary with spontaneous delight. This was indeed the playmate with whom she had hunted in the game-park of the castle in Vienna. Their greeting was formal, according to court etiquette, but they smiled at each other like happy children and were content.

What escaped Mary in the first moments struck the sharp eyes of her German escort and drew the notice of her elegant ladies in waiting. Among his showy courtiers King Lajos's appearance was modest to the point of poverty.⁹ He wore some wonderful jewels, it is true, but his tunic was shabby, his hose well worn, and it was not just a slight awkwardness, due to his age, which gave him such a neglected look. The elegant Bishop of Trient realized at once that Lajos looked like a poor man's child; the king was a nice, kindly boy in threadbare clothes. The German courtiers stared at him. Their glances traveled from Lajos's plain doublet to the splendor of the clergymen and nobles about him. They drew their own conclusions, thought a moment of their own future. But the bishop of Vác, Vice-Chancellor of Hungary, had already begun his speech, addressing his new mistress in a flourish of elegant Latin sentences which conveyed the joy

of her husband, the gratitude of her people. On Mary's behalf Andrea da Burgo, the imperial ambassador, voiced her thanks in a few gracious words.

The two royal processions combined and moved along the road to the city, which welcomed the new queen with clatter of arms and tramp of hooves. For the king had had the bloody sword, token of Hungary's need, carried through the entire country, in order that each member of the nobility should send his prescribed number of armed men for the battle against the Turks, now alarmingly close. It was a world in arms, according to the Venetian ambassador, a city of soldiers, that Mary entered. There was neither time nor thought for an official welcome.

Mary was able to spend but a few hours in her husband's company. For Lajos's charger stood ready in the courtyard of the castle, and on the same day he left for his camp outside the city, where his still scanty troops awaited him. With his departure all warmth left the unknown castle Mary must now consider as her home, where bitter experience would soon teach her that she was living in a world that had armed, not only against the East, against the Turks, but against the West as well, against herself.

The Hungarians—those of them, at least, who ruled the country—stood at this time in bad odor in Europe. By some they were considered the worst people in the world, the scum of the earth—"Hongari in universali sono la pegior generation dil mondo", the shrewd Venetian ambassador Massaro wrote to his government; "sono la fece del mondo".¹⁰ He had got to know them as people who loved only themselves, certainly not each other. They were consumed with egotism, and their interest in the state ended with what they could steal from it. Though they hated each other, they found this no impediment to being each other's guests. Even the elements of justice were unknown to them. The worst crimes might be perpetrated, as long as one managed to bribe a few high personages. They were proud, and boundlessly arrogant. They knew not the art of government, let alone that of administration. They accepted advice from no one, and the decisions they took with great rapidity they were equally slow to carry out. These were the characteristics, Massaro declared, of all magnates, all churchmen, all members of the lower nobility. They were themselves responsible for the country's downfall. If King Lajos were not so noble and

so innocent, divine justice would certainly do nothing to prevent the destruction of this nation.

One of the acid Massaro's successors, Lorenzo Contarini, once indicated the method by which these ill-natured, disloyal people—"uomini di mala natura, mancatori di fede"—could be governed.¹¹ They needed a king who continually held a sword before their noses. They knew from experience what it meant to have such a king. Matthias had kept them in order, and when after his greatest triumph he unexpectedly died, they had known one thing for certain: never again would they elect a king who would dominate them, but a kindly, manageable man like Vladislav of Bohemia, a ruler, as the old Voivode of Transylvania (Siebenbürgen) expressed it, whose hair they could pull, and to whom they could say, as the Bohemian barons had done: "du pist unser kunig wir sein dein herrn"—"you are our king, we are your masters." ¹²

They had got what they wanted, but not what their country needed. Under the regency that ruled in Lajos' name, ecclesiastics and magnates went further than ever. The bishops, who also occupied the highest offices of state, amassed great wealth, lived in luxury, maintained troops as if they were kings, and did not hesitate to put the greater part of the royal income, which passed through their greedy hands, into their own pockets. Then they would lend money to the Crown at usurious interest and charge the exhausted royal treasury enormous extra sums for carrying out their own official duties. Maximilian's ambassador at Buda, von Herberstein, dramatically described their mode of life in his diary: ¹³

* "Heavens, what great goings-on and pomp or, if one dared speak the truth, great arrogance was seen in Hungary in those days. Mostly among the bishops and also among many secular officials. How they came riding in with great numbers of horses, armed and equipped, like hussars, with silver and gold trimmings!

* "Ach Gott, was grosses wesenns unnd pomp oder, ob man die wahrheit dörffte sagen, grosser hochfart dazumall in Hungern gesehen was. Das maiste von den bischoven und gleichwoll auch von erlichen weltlichen amtleuten. Wie sy mit grosser anzahl phärdt, gerüst und hussarisch mit silber und gold geziert, da eingeritten seind! Wie ire trummetter zu den malzeiten in allen gassen gehört sein worden! Wie grossmachtige Panckhet und mallzeit sy gehalten. Ire vill diener da woll geclaidt gestanden. Mit vill unnd grossen hauffen sy geen hof und uber die gassen gangen oder geritten. Ir khunig off nit gehabt sein notdurfft!"

How their trumpeters were heard at mealtimes in every street! What mighty banquets and dinners they held. Their many servants stood by well-dressed. In many and great throngs they walked or rode to court and along the streets. Their king often lacked the first necessities!"

Herberstein was not guilty of exaggeration. Among his prodigal nobles and prelates, who rivaled each other in luxury and splendor, King Lajos was so poor that often he had not enough money to live on. "Sometimes there is nothing to cook in his kitchens," wrote Massaro, "and recently the court sent out a servant to borrow fourteen ducats . . ." ¹⁴ The royal income, which under Matthias had still amounted to 800,000 ducats, had diminished, thanks to the self-interested housekeeping of these servants of their country, to 140,000. These funds were, moreover, mortgaged for years ahead, in spite of the Diet's prohibition. If the young King honored a monastery with his visit, he was given a few gold guilders for the mass or as a gift to the poor. If he had to make a courtesy present in money to some foreign ambassador, the amount had to be borrowed against enormous interest. Only Margrave George of Brandenburg had pity on his helpless pupil, and he provided the royal table almost daily with wine. He spent more than four thousand gold guilders a year on behalf of his penniless nephew.

Under these conditions one could scarcely speak of a government. The King was a child. The Diet, in which every nobleman had the right to appear, was an institution torn by party strife, in which the supporters of Zápolya (whom many nobles wished to place upon the throne as a national Magyar king) fought those of the royal house; in which the lower nobility worked off its enmity against the rich magnates; in which the various groups had but one thing in common: their hatred of the prelates, raised to positions of wealth and power by the autocratic King Matthias, and of everything that came from the West, of German methods and German culture, and above all of the House of Habsburg, which might put an end to their regime of unbridled selfishness.

Such were the ruling classes of this country, once so proud, which should have been Europe's shield against the Ottoman menace, against attack by a military dictatorship organized with fanatical severity. With finances in hopeless confusion, troops could not be paid, border fortifications on which the fate of

the country depended stood neglected, ungarrisoned. If a few soldiers were available, they lacked not courage but weapons and food supplies, while government leaders would not permit each other's protégés to take command of the derelict forts that were doomed to fall at the first onslaught. A few years later, when conditions had grown even worse, Mary's brother Ferdinand painted the behavior of the Hungarians in these biting words: * "They think only of their own profit, even if the whole realm were to perish, and are discouraged and without any defense save that of their tongues and of malicious words and complaints demanding every day a new king and new government and wanting benefits without wishing to deserve them." ¹⁵

It was the same in this summer of 1521, when King Lajos had to beg help from the Pope and the Emperor and all the Christian powers against the dangers that threatened Hungary and Europe. But it was already too late. While Lajos was still waiting in the camp near Buda, where meanwhile scarcely thirteen hundred men had gathered under the royal standard, the fortress of Szábács had already succumbed to the Turkish blows.¹⁶ The few hundred defenders had fought to the last man. Their heads were cut off and decorated the road along which Sultan Suleiman himself entered the fortress. A few weeks later his troops joined the divisions which had already besieged Belgrade for a month. Seven hundred Hungarians defended the city with little more than their swords and lances. For another month the overwhelmingly superior Turkish forces remained powerless against their heroic courage. Then walls and towers gave way to the fire of the Ottoman cannon. Belgrade fell. Hungary lay open to a Turkish invasion. To Mary, alone in the castle of Buda, these were months of agonizing uncertainty. She had seen the king for only a few hours, and when her real marriage should at last take place was a question to which nobody was inclined to give her an answer. The king must first be declared of age, explained his councilors, whose hostility she could daily discern more clearly under their flattering and courteous manner. Moreover,

* "Ils ne regardent que leur propre profit et sy tout le royaume devoit perir, et sont descuragies et sans nulle defesse que des langues et de mal dire et se plaindre et demander tous les jours nouvel roy et nouvel gouvernement et des biens sans les vouloir meriter."

they told her, no princess could become the wife of a king of Hungary before she herself had been crowned queen; in times of peace these formalities required a long preparation, and Her Most Serene Majesty should understand that under the circumstances of the moment, now that the Great Turk might march on Buda itself, there could be no thought of a wedding ceremony.

Mary understood what this meant. Her own future had become dependent on the fate of Hungary. She endeavored to do what little lay within her power to be of some use. She wrote humble letters to her brothers, Emperor Charles and Archduke Ferdinand, admonishing them to make peace with all the rulers of Christendom so that together they could fend off the Turkish danger from Hungary and Europe.¹⁷ She tried, as far as possible in view of the enmity surrounding her, to look after the personal interests of her bridegroom and financed from her own pocket the renewal of his shabby wardrobe. She had to struggle with chamberlains and ladies in waiting who had seen fit to drive the young King from the best apartments in the palace and who now found themselves obliged to stand aside for the energetic Habsburg princess. Hanns Schweinpeckh, one of her faithful Austrian courtiers, wrote home that a certain elderly lady in waiting was "greatly vexed" at having to give up her room, but it had been of no use, for the Queen had "made up her mind and knew she must be master or servant throughout": "Das hat sy ein grossen Verdruss empfangen, aber hilft nichts, haben den Kopfh gespitzt, muess hindurch Maister oder knecht zu werden!"¹⁸

To be master or servant, that was the question; and Mary was too much the granddaughter and sister of emperors ever to let herself be humiliated. She, the Queen of Hungary, to put up with her husband being held in contempt and laughed at, deceived and robbed and belittled? She, to let servants who had dared to drive the King from his rooms lay down the law to her? Mary was ready to take up the gauntlet thrown down by her Hungarian entourage. And she stood not entirely alone in her fight. She felt supported by the devotion of Margrave George of Brandenburg and the faithful imperial ambassador da Burgo, who helped her where they could during these first months of her stay in Buda.

Mary's Austrian courtiers too ranged themselves on the side

of their young queen, looking upon her enemies as their own. Hanns Schweinpeckh wrote to his son about conditions in the castle at Buda:

* "Must advise you a little that we are in no good and faithful country, the people great and small show us little kindness, and the higher, the less they like us; . . . they would like to keep the sword in their own hand, and leave the title to the King and the Queen and themselves have the use of it, which is the way it is. Have handled all the King's revenues in such a manner that he has nothing to eat, has not even a good coat, the Queen has had to dress him. . . . Has no power, must dance to their piping.

"The King is indeed honest, they love each other beyond measure, which the false dogs see, and where they can forestall it, they do not let the King go to my most Gracious Lady, would like to have us go home for a year or two, so that they could carry on their affairs better, but this will not happen, we are of a mind now as far as possible to stay with the King and go through all adventures."¹⁹

Mary's devoted attendants were not going to let themselves be driven out of Hungary. Yet her opponents were already spreading the tale that she intended to seek safety and would return to Germany if the Turks came any nearer. A rumor of this kind was especially fitted to stir up the hatred of the Hungarian people against their prospective queen. While the inhabitants of the border cities were being massacred, while the Magyar soldiers were giving their lives for their country at the King's call, the Queen would flee the country? They were only

* "Muss euch ein wenig anzeigen, dass wir in keinem guten und treuen land sein, uns das Volk gross unt klein wenig guts gönnt, und je höher, je weniger möchten leiden; . . . sie wollten das Schwert gerne selbs in der Hand behalten, und dem Kunig mit der Kuniginn den namen lassen unt Sy den nuz haben, als auch ist. Haben alle einkomen des Kunigs also zugericht, das er nit zu essen, noch ein gueten Rockh hat, die Kunigin hat ihn kleiden müssen . . . Hat kein gewalt, muss tanzen was sie pfeifen.

"Für wahr der Kunig ist rechtschaffen, haben einander aus dermassen lieb, das sehen die valschen hund, unt wo sy konntten davor sein, Sy lassen den Kunig nit gehen zu meiner Gnedigsten Frauen, möchten leiden, wir zugen wider haimb ein jar oder zwei, damit sie ir sach desto pass [besser] machen kunntten, aber wird nit beschehen [geschehen], sind noch des synns, zu nechst und möglich bei dem Kunig zu bleiben unt allen abenteuer zu besteen."

too ready to loathe the Habsburg princess more deeply than they did already.

But Mary did not dream of seeking safety while her husband and country were in danger. She learned that the royal troops were to strike camp at Adony and she travelled thither with Andrea da Burgo to see the king depart and to inspect the troops.²⁰ Nobody need imagine that she would flee to the West for safety. Here she was, at the imperial ambassador's side, small and slim and energetic, on a fiery horse which she seemed to handle without difficulty, in the midst of the officers ready for battle. The chivalrous Hungarians greeted her with tumultuous cheers. Trumpets sounded. The troops may have been few in number but they were ready to fight to the death for their King and his Queen. Yet their enthusiasm, alas, was but a straw-fire.

While the weak Hungarian army moved eastward, news reached the King that Sultan Suleiman would not undertake any campaign before the winter. He was temporarily satisfied with Belgrade, his troops were withdrawing over the Hungarian border. The country breathed again—yet for how long? Now the moment had come to unite the tragically divided nation; now was the time for people, nobility, and church to pay the taxes with which an unconquerable army could be recruited and equipped. In an access of patriotism it was resolved to turn the camp into a Diet in order to take definite and salutary decisions concerning Hungary's future.

But even these good intentions failed. Fever broke out in the camp.²¹ The young King himself fell ill, and in great haste the troops disbanded for fear of the plague. Lajos was carried to Buda in a litter. Mary sent her courtiers to meet him. She herself awaited him on the drawbridge,²² full of joy at his return, full of fear of what might befall them.

Pale and thin, exhausted by fever and deeply saddened by the fall of his heroic fortress of Belgrade, Lajos stood before his little bride. Mary saw that he could fight no more, that he was too ill and weak to stand upright. He was a poor helpless child and she a strong woman with courage and endurance for both of them. She kissed Lajos, supported him as he walked, led him to the castle chapel, where they knelt to thank God for their reunion. Mary seemed to know for the first time that she really loved him, now that she had seen him so faint and exhausted,

so sad and deserted. All that was strong and brave in her revived. She would lead him and protect him, fight for him and make him happy. This would be her aim in life.

Now nothing should stand in the way of their marriage any longer. While Lajos was convalescent, the Estates of the realm met in Buda, took measures for defending the country, approved the heaviest taxation.²⁸ On every farmstead, on every cask of wine and beer, on horses and cattle, sheep, goats and pigs, on the wheels of the mills and the nets of the fishermen, a tax would be raised. The nobles undertook to hand over not less than half their revenue, ecclesiastics were to pay one penny in ten. The King would at last enjoy all his own income again, so that he could bring his own troops into the field. The pawned crownlands were returned to the Crown, often without having been redeemed by due payments. Patriotism swept the Diet like a wave—Hungary seemed about to be rescued. It was decided to declare the King of age: "His Majesty, our only Lord, King, Ruler, and executor of our Laws", they called him in resounding words. The date of Mary's coronation, the day of the royal wedding were fixed. At last, unity seemed to gain ground, the sun seemed to shine again over the country.

On December 7, 1521, Lajos and Mary left Buda for Székesfehérvár. The Estates of the realm accompanied them in a glittering procession. In the venerable city where for centuries Hungary's kings had been anointed and crowned in the Church of St. Stephen, more impressive ceremonies took place during the following days. From the pulpit King Lajos, freed of the guardianship of his regents, swore the oath of loyalty to the Estates, and the paladin handed over the government to him. Next day, December 11, Mary of Austria was anointed Queen of Hungary and received the Holy Crown from the hands of the oldest Hungarian prelate, Bishop Simon Erdödy of Zagreb (Agram). Brilliant festivities followed. All the sorrow of that summer seemed forgotten. Together Lajos and Mary returned to Buda to make preparations for their wedding which, already twice blessed, at last took place on January 13, 1522.

The royal chancellery had issued invitations to the ceremony to all the Christian rulers of Europe. But the secretaries had been so slow in dispatching the invitations that even Archduke Ferdinand had not had time to send a special embassy to his sister's wedding. But Mary no longer felt the loneliness from which she

had suffered in the beginning. She was in love. Nothing and no one could part her now from the young husband who adored her. And for the first time in her life she was completely happy.

At last she could get to know him, the kind, gentle boy who was held in less esteem in the castle of Buda than the least of his servants. Lajos was an angelic youth, according to the Venetian Ambassador: "si pol dir esser anzelicho."²⁴ He was so kind-hearted, so devout, and so charming that even the voluble Francesco Massaro had to admit he could find no words to describe him. His generosity knew no bounds. He, who possessed nothing, was prepared to give away everything. His sunny, cheerful nature knew no anger, no revenge, no suspicion. No one had ever seen him angry, he forgave every offence, every insult, and like his father Vladislav, wanted only to think kindly of everyone. With his tall body, grown too fast for his strength, and his friendly, candid face, he resembled a good-natured, playful puppy, always happy when he was well, always ready for a romp, active and full of physical vitality. In other respects too he was as yet no more than a happy young animal. The serious side of life, the cares of his premature kingship, found him defenceless. Although he possessed an excellent intelligence, went through his schooling without difficulty and could express himself in four languages, reflection was a torture to him. After all, he had so many wise, sensible councilors with so much more experience than he himself possessed. They would simply have to weigh problems for him, take decisions, determine the course he was to follow. If only they would let him go hunting, run through the woods with his dogs, practice tilting with the noisy young nobles in his entourage. For armor, for spears and swords Lajos had a passion. To him they were a means of self-expression, and often his courtiers saw their young ruler, on hearing some good piece of news, reach for his lance or his sword, and challenge one of his nobles in a burst of excitement, unable to express his joy by any other means than wild movements.

To Mary he was an ideal companion, and it did not take her long to discover this. She wrote to the Princess de Chimay, whose husband had been tutor to Monseigneur Charles and his sisters in Malines, that her very dear lord and husband was in good health and that she could and dared boast that she had the paragon of husbands—"Du roy, mon très-cher seigneur et mary,

vous ay aussi vouly escripre," ran the closing lines of her letter, "ascavoir qu'il est en bonne santé, et que me puis et oze vanter que j'ay le paragon des mariz." ²⁵

Well might she call him an exemplary husband, this young Lajos who spoiled her, heeding her every wish and placing no hindrance whatever in the way of her very positive character. While she was strong-willed and purposeful, he gave way in his innate need to yield, to accept guidance. Her precocious and intelligent judgment was a revelation to which he clung with naive admiration. His irrepressible craving for activity found an echo in Mary's vitality. Together they hunted in the wooded hills round Buda or on the island of Csepel in the Danube. They spent whole days on horseback, to the horror of the Venetian ambassador, who did not understand this peculiar queen, this active, boyish amazon, who preferred riding lively horses to anything else ²⁶ and whose charm totally escaped the sensual Italian. The royal castle in which Lajos had lived as a lonely outcast, at last became under Mary's energetic management a proper home. The Margrave of Brandenburg, who used to arrange the colorful festivities and "Mummereien" which his pupil enjoyed so much, encouraged the royal children in their plans for gay balls and banquets. Lajos thought himself in paradise. Was it any wonder that he worshiped his young queen, whose arrival had changed his life so much?

On February 8, 1522, he had signed the document by which Mary received her appanage. This was a considerable property, which would enable her to maintain a brilliant court, according to Lajos' wish.²⁷ The lands from which she would draw her yearly revenues were situated in the richest areas of Hungary. The cities of Körmöcbanya (Kremnitz), Selmeczbanya (Schemnitz), and Breznobanya (Bresnitz), with their gold and silver mines; the castle of Besztercebanya (Neusohl) in the same region; in the immediate surroundings of the capital, the castle and city of O-Buda and the island of Csepel. Further east Mary could call the famous salt-mines of the Comity of Máramaros her own, together with the castle and city of Huszt, and to the northeast of Buda the cities of Miskolcz, Diósgyőr with its iron mines, Munkács with its castle of the same name, and the small town of Beregszász in the midst of its vineyards. Moreover a number of manors were allocated to her in Bohemia, Lajos' second kingdom.

In that country, urgent voices were raised to the effect that the King, being now of age, should at last come to Prague to have his wife anointed and crowned and to bring order into the affairs of Bohemia, where, as in Hungary, endless quarrels between parties of the nobility were undermining the country. The Hungarians opposed this plan. How could the King leave the country now that spring would soon come, when fresh attacks from the Turks might be expected? The Turks, who would look upon the departure of the royal pair as a sign of fear, as a flight? The Bohemians, however, declared that they would keep the King only a very short time and let him return to Hungary before summer, accompanied by 50,000 picked troops and provided with money for their maintenance. If the King did not come to Bohemia, this help would not be granted—it was for Lajos to decide.

Not Lajos but Mary made the decision. The journey to Prague was undertaken, a difficult journey through a region where provisions were scarce, so that the royal company had to be content with very little; where there was no hay for the horses, which died of hunger, or if they remained alive were too weak to be of any use. An early thaw had transformed the roads into swamps and the toiling procession advanced scarcely a few miles a day. More than a month after leaving Buda it at last arrived in Prague, exhausted with fatigue, people and animals thin and weakened.²⁸

Once more Mary was obliged to recognize the bitter reality that her husband totally lacked power.²⁹ The Estates had gathered, the program of the discussions was known: the King's oath, the Queen's coronation, settlement of party quarrels, Bohemia's help in fighting the Turks, whose victory would be fatal not only to Hungary. Time pressed, as the journey had caused so much delay. But the Estates put forward their demands and were not prepared to give in. Not until May 9 did Lajos take the oath on the country's privileges and there was still no agreement with the obstinate Bohemians about Mary's coronation; they would not stop fighting over each other's places in the royal procession, and grudged each other the honor of carrying the coronation insignia to the church. Meanwhile messengers arrived in Prague reporting that the Sultan had set out with his armies and within a few weeks would reach the Hungarian border. The situation seemed hopeless.

But Mary again took the helm. If the gentlemen could not

agree who was to carry the crown and who the scepter, their services would simply be dispensed with. And when at last, on the first of June, she set forth in state across the square of the Hradcany Castle to the cathedral, Mary herself carried the symbolic golden loaves, King Lajos the crown, the scepter and the orb, and Margrave George of Brandenburg the sword.

Now there only remained the negotiations for help against the Turks. The Bohemians made less haste than ever. And when unexpectedly news was received that Sultan Suleiman had chosen another objective and had declared war on the Knights of St. John on the island of Rhodes, the gentlemen at Prague no longer saw any reason whatever for letting their King depart before a solution had been found to all disagreements. Not until the end of April of the following year could Lajos and Mary start the return journey to Hungary, without Bohemian troops, without Bohemian money. To Hungary, where every trace of unity had disappeared, where Zápolya held secret meetings with his followers, where the royal power was less respected than ever, and the royal treasuries entirely exhausted. To a divided, neglected, and defenseless country.

CHAPTER SIX

For a Pennyworth or Two of Piety



... Wollt Ir mir um ein Pfennich
oder zwen Frumkait abkaufen,
will ichs Euch gern verkaufen,
wenn ich hab vil zu vil Frumkait.

... Should you wish to buy a
pennyworth or two of piety from
me, I will gladly sell it to you, for
I have much too much piety.

Mary to Margrave Albrecht of
Brandenburg, June 2, 1523¹

IN these first years of their marriage, Mary and Lajos lived like a pair of twins, like carefree children released at last from the pressure of guardians and tutors, at last in a position to go their own way, to do what they liked according to the whim of each moment.

Mary's initiative and lively imagination determined the tempo and style of their activities, and it was she who devised the festivities, the fancy-dress parties they enjoyed so enormously, while Lajos meekly followed where she led. The same severity of dress which made Mary's slight, boyish figure so striking amongst her exuberantly attired maids of honor, accentuated in Lajos's appearance the almost feminine gentleness which made him so attractive to his energetic young wife. Thus we see the young couple in the portraits the court painter Hans Krell made of them during their stay in Prague, or perhaps shortly after their return to Buda.² Mary's simple but strikingly elegant dress of

slashed black velvet, with the finely pleated muslin guimpe, the embroidered collar and the severe flat bonnet ornamented with gold pins, very much resembles that worn by Lajos, who, with his long reddish-blond hair and the coquettish wreath of twisted gold cloth on his beret, makes an almost more girlish impression than the slender, athletic Mary. Even the downy beard not yet entirely covering his chin does not detract from this effect.

While still in Prague, where they wasted the endless months the Bohemian gentlemen took up with their quarrels, their life had become a series of festivities. When after their return to Hungary they once more felt the oppression of confusion and inevitable disaster, it was not only their thoughtless youth that made them seek distraction in the dangers of the hunt and the glitter of balls and tournaments. If Lajos felt no other need than to live in the agreeable present, Mary with her so much ripper insight must have been aware of the abyss toward which they were drifting. But she was still too young to be able to steer their lives in a different direction.

Moreover, those about them encouraged the royal children to continue in the path they had chosen. Margrave George of Brandenburg's joviality still set the tone of the court. He knew no greater delight, as the severe papal Nuntius Burgio reports, than a dance every day, preferably before the midday meal, even before breakfast.³ The frugal Italian was appalled at the indecent appetite of the German prince, who, they said, had taught the King to eat not twice but seven times a day. And Burgio reproached the Margrave not only for imparting such harmful habits to Lajos. Brandenburg, he wrote, had flooded the court of Buda with his German creatures. In bed, at table, in his apartments, and in his council, King Lajos found nothing but: Germany. The Nuntius held, and so did the Hungarian people, that the extravagance, the recklessness and the craving for pleasure which ruled the royal court were of German origin. The indignant Hungarians soon began to blame Brandenburg for everything that did not please them in their country. The way he had educated the King was disastrous; he was a libertine, an irresponsible rake—and still worse, still more odious, he was a heretic. He frankly showed his sympathy for the teachings of Martin Luther, and good Catholic Hungarian magnates thought they detected his influence upon the religious life of the royal couple.⁴ Had not Lajos, goaded on by Brandenburg, backed a reformed

city government in Silesia against loyal Catholic monks? Had he not dismissed all high officials before his departure from Prague and replaced them by people who sympathized with Luther, or with the equally heretical Utraquists? Even the governor he had appointed over Bohemia, Duke Charles of Munsterberg, was in personal touch with Luther.

The irritation in certain Hungarian circles at their young King's way of life certainly had a national and political rather than an ethical or moral basis. It was the aversion to everything German, and certainly not a distaste for festivities, that dictated their attitude. Did not the same Venetian ambassador who had called Margrave George a rake, describe the excessive extravagance of the Magyar prelates and barons? The Palatine, Stephan Báthory, whose position was equivalent to that of deputy-king, was drunk the livelong day, according to Massaro, from morning to evening and from evening to morning.⁵ His drinking companion was the Voivode of Transylvania, János Zápolya himself, the nationalist pretender to the throne, who could certainly not be accused of German sympathies, and who therefore would have been forgiven even the worst dissipations more readily than young Lajos and his "German" spouse the quite innocent amusements which showed nothing worse than childish high spirits.

For, what did the misbehavior of the royal children really amount to? King Sigismund of Poland, Lajos' uncle, to whom the Hungarians had complained of their young ruler's frivolity, remonstrated in a serious tone with his nephew.⁶ Lajos and Mary ought to understand, he wrote, that they should keep God before their eyes, in all their actions, because their royal power rested in His hands, and before Him they were as dust before the wind. They should serve God, frequently say their prayers, in church as well as at home. Did Sigismund mean by this that the children had fallen short in performing their devotions? He is clearer in his summing up of their crimes. They went hunting too much, and they ought to consider that hunting on holy days was a serious breach of God's commandment. If there were pressing affairs of state to be dealt with one certainly ought not to go hunting. It was unfitting that they should keep their dogs with them in their drawing rooms. Their other amusements also should be virtuous and in accord with their royal dignity. They would do well to use the baths—probably the medicinal

baths in the surroundings of Buda which were famous even in ancient times—somewhat less, and not to eat while bathing, as this was very harmful to one's health. But above all Lajos ought to avoid associating with frivolous courtiers who only thought of merry-making and drinking bouts. He should surround himself with serious men, Sigismund advised his now seventeen-year-old nephew.

Complaints about the young people's way of life also went to the court of Archduke Ferdinand. Sigismund von Herberstein was sent to Buda to call the Queen's attention to the irresponsibility of her carefree ways. Actually the wise old ambassador had quite another matter to discuss, but he was able to add his words of advice with tact and Mary listened graciously. Could she hold it against this faithful servant of her House if he urged her to think of the future a little? To save against the moment when she might find her own treasury empty? She should not forget that the Hungarians were a wild and rebellious people, and that Hungary was continually threatened by a powerful enemy. Was it not more royal to help others than to have to be helped?

Mary thanked the good Herberstein warmly for his well-meant advice, but at that moment it had little effect. The royal household did not become more economical and two years later Burgio still complained of the extravagance of her Majesty, whom even the revenues of two kingdoms did not seem to suffice.⁷

It is to the Italians at Mary's court and particularly to the Venetians that we are indebted for contemporary information about the young queen's character and behavior. Neither her manner nor her appearance was likely to find much favor in the eyes of these Southerners, who demanded such different qualities of a woman from those which King Lajos' "Flemish spouse" as they called her, possessed.⁸ The first impression she made had indeed been favorable. Lorenzo Orio, who had been present when she entered Buda, called her in his account of that day an intelligent and charming woman, "*dona savia et afabile*."⁹ But his successor, Massaro, who also judged Mary's Hungarian subjects so harshly, had little good to say of the young queen. He found her lively and amusing, but in his eyes she was too ugly and too small to be really charming. The republican in Massaro reacted sharply to Mary's imperial pride, to her contempt for her entourage and the vindictiveness he observed in her. Mary

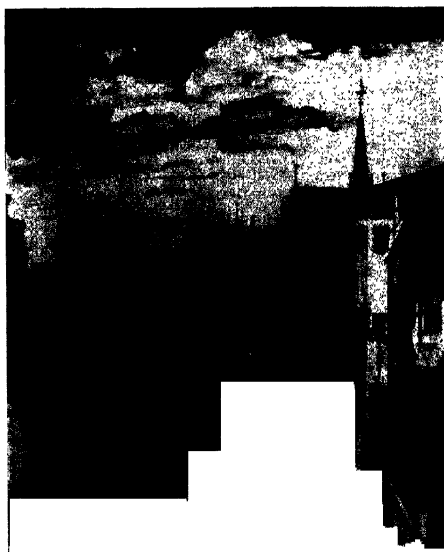
AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY





The Habsburg Family:
Standing—Maximilian,
Philip the Handsome,
Mary of Burgundy
(grandmother of Mary
of Hungary); seated—
Ferdinand, Charles V,
Lajos II of Hungary,
by Bernard Striegel.

*Kunsthistorisches Museum,
Vienna*



The Court of Innsbruck Castle,
by Albrecht Dürer. After
F. Winkler, *Die Zeichnungen
Albrecht Dürers*.

is most haughty, disdainful, and vindictive—"superbissima, sdegnosa et vindicativa"—and stands in bad repute among the Hungarians.¹⁰ She urges the King on to thousands of iniquities. Her only aim in life is riding, merrymaking and eating at every hour of the day, so that she piles one attack of indigestion on another, which is the reason she does not become pregnant. She is an enemy of Venice, the ambassador tells his government—and it seems not unlikely that here we find the cause of Massaro's biting criticism. In 1523 it is Lorenzo Orio again who calls her "small and proud", but he was able to observe a change in the political inclinations of the Queen, who now speaks of Venice with great respect.¹¹ Orio is therefore much more moderate in his judgment than his predecessor, and he has to admit that King Lajos loves no other woman than his wife.

A milder judgment might perhaps explain these traits in a woman of Mary's energy and self-assurance, permeated with the pride of belonging to a dynasty predestined to rule the world, and now placed among people who wished only to humiliate her and deprive her of her rights. Mary worshiped her young husband with the deep devotion that often binds a strong person to a weak one. And she was obliged to witness the disdain in which he was held by people who in her eyes should have been his humble servants. Mary hated those bishops and magnates whose selfishness and ambition undermined the authority of which the King was bearer by the grace of God. She had no inclination to forgive those who trod underfoot what she looked upon as her highest rights. She found in Hungary only humiliation and enmity instead of the love that might have tempered her pride. Much suffering and ever more enmity were to be her lot because of the harshness to which a hard beginning had condemned her.

Against the turquoise-green background of the portrait Hans Krell painted of the Queen of Hungary, we see a pale face surrounded by dark-blond hair. It is a reserved and cool countenance, which looks beyond the observer and seems to repel his fascinated gaze. A great loneliness surrounds this young woman, who seems to have withdrawn into a world of her own, where envy and hatred find no entry. Mary posed for Krell in the few quiet hours her energy granted her between the social activities for which she was so much criticized and which cost her treasury great sums, even though she permitted herself ever more rarely

the luxury of paying her debts. She seems to have increasingly succumbed to the temptation of letting her creditors wait for payment. After Lajos' tragic death, after the fall of Hungary, bills were still being presented to the Austrian government which amongst war and confusion called up memories of the glitter and gaiety of Mary's parties. Krell sent to Archduke Ferdinand's treasurer his account for work done at the request of the Hungarian court between 1522 and 1526,¹² when Mary and Lajos were trying to escape from hopeless realities in endless parties. The many portraits he made of the royal pair were never paid for. They were presented, Krell was able to say, to Margrave George von Brandenburg, to "Margrethn, Niderlenderin, meiner gnedigsten frawen ir maj. hofmaisterin gewest," probably none other than the damoiselle Marguerite de Poitiers, Mary's old "bercheresse"; to a certain "Hanewald, Niderlender." In 1527 Krell was still working on two portraits of the King and the Queen, "as tall as Their Majesties were".

Besides these portraits Krell mentions quite different, less official work done for Their Majesties. During a visit of the court to Bratislava in 1523 he had painted costumes for a fancy-dress party and gilded food for His Majesty, namely cinnamon bark, cassia buds and melon, also coloring flagpoles and knobs and various other decorative objects for a banquet—"zu ainer mummerei die klaiden gemalt, . . . seiner maj. essen verguldt, . . . Zimetrinden, negelein und melaw, auch fendlein und knopf verguldt und manigerlai angestrichen zu ainem schaw-essen." For the same banquet he had fashioned storks' wings and feathers out of paper. And he enumerates other more domestic items. They made him gild the poles of the royal sleigh and paint the armor room in the castle. Krell had met the costs of all the materials himself, and after Lajos' treasurer had paid him 125 Hungarian guilders in 1524, in 1526 his claims still came to 1,131 Rhenish guilders.

Not was this the only case of small creditors who remained unpaid. In 1523 the Nürnberg city council was obliged to repeat its request of the preceding year that her Most Serene Majesty would settle her debt with a woman called Barbara, whose now deceased husband had sold some ornaments to Her Majesty in Prague and had never been able to receive payment. Barbara, who had small children, had been left in poverty, and would soon not have enough to eat if the Queen did not meet her lawful demands.¹³

Mary certainly had at this time no understanding of economy and sound housekeeping. In this respect too she was like her grandfather Maximilian. Though her yearly income was estimated at 40,000 ducats, in addition to the sums the King presented to her, her debts mounted up in an alarming manner. The Hungarian moneylenders joyfully charged their careless queen the same usurious interest they had asked earlier of Vladislav and Lajos.

Yet despite this story of banquets, hunting parties and debts, a new undertone began to sound in Mary's life. She was now no longer exclusively an infatuated and playful child, judging life only by appearances. Her sharp intelligence found itself faced with the spiritual problems of her time, and she became increasingly anxious to know and understand the things that caused such a violent upheaval in her world. Moreover, she now learned more and more to discern the causes that doomed the kind and gentle Lajos to be powerless against quarrelling parties and the selfish individuals whose actions were driving Hungary towards the abyss. She felt ever more strongly inclined to take upon herself the responsibilities her husband was unable to carry. Despite the rush of her social gaieties she began to distinguish other values, to sense the needs of her time and her country.

In Vienna and Innsbruck she had already come in contact with the work and aspirations of those same humanists in whom her grandfather had taken such an interest. In Buda too she had been greeted by ambassadors from this republic of letters, which included the poets and thinkers and scholars of Europe in a truly international community. Hieronymus Balbi, Bishop of Gurk and one of Lajos's teachers, had accompanied her from Linz to Buda, and among her husband's entourage she had met Piso,¹⁴ the Provost of Pécs, whose task it had been to instruct the young King in that elegant, mellifluous Latin of which he was himself such an exceptional master and in which he had been corresponding for years with the prince of humanists, Erasmus himself. Piso, who was also a charming courtier, very soon won Mary's affection and managed to be included in the small group in daily contact with the royal pair. He did what he could to convey something of his love for literature and of his admiration for the great Erasmus, glorified in his own circle as the light of the world, to the receptive young Queen. Piso accompanied Their Majesties to the coronation in Prague and reported thence to Erasmus an incident in which he had been able to introduce him as the central topic of

conversation at the royal table.¹⁵ He was dining with the King and Queen, together with the Imperial ambassador da Burgo, Margrave George of Brandenburg and his brother Albrecht, Grand Master of the German Order, and two Bohemian noblemen, when the talk turned upon Martin Luther, who was not very highly regarded by Their Majesties. Margrave George, who never concealed his sympathy for the courageous monk, remarked that Luther owed his fundamental ideas entirely to this same Erasmus whom the King and Queen so greatly admired. Piso promptly stepped into the breach for his friend. He too had often heard this stated, he had said, but in fact the relationship was quite different, as he was able to confirm from a letter he had just received from Erasmus himself.

This information created a sensation. And while a servant was sent to Piso's apartments to fetch the letter in question, the discussion continued with animation on the question whether Erasmus' views really corresponded entirely with those of Luther. The letter was brought and Mary was the first to get hold of it, eager to see the famous handwriting she was not yet acquainted with. After that came the King's turn. He was already familiar with the writing through letters Piso had received from the great humanist some years ago in Rome. The interesting epistle flew from hand to hand—and then all maintained a respectful silence while it was read aloud. The final opinion was unanimous. Piso was right—and it was a triumphant moment for this dedicated Erasmian when he could clear his revered master of the stain of being the spiritual father of Luther's dangerous theories.

The opinion defended at Mary's table by Margrave George had at that time countless adherents all over Europe. The phrase, "Erasmus laid the eggs, and Luther hatched out the chickens," had acquired the force of a popular proverb.¹⁶ Though Erasmus thought he had exploded it by remarking that he had only laid a chicken's egg, whereas Luther's chick belonged to an entirely different breed, the fact could not be denied that he himself, through his biting and generally well received criticism of ecclesiastical abuses, and above all through his masterly edition of the New Testament in Greek and Latin, had been one of the indispensable pioneers who had made Luther's appearance possible. Doctor Martin himself regarded him as such, though he compared him to Moses, who was permitted to gaze upon the Promised Land but not to enter it.

Mary, now sixteen, had in her young life already seen too much of the abuses both Erasmus and Luther were attacking to be able to shut herself off from the confusing problems the ecclesiastical conflict obliged her contemporaries to face. Could she, who had learned to admire the great Erasmus as the model of wisdom and knowledge, feel any antipathy to Luther's pronouncement, which really seemed to be wholly in the spirit of Erasmus? She herself had seen her husband impoverished and deprived of his rights by the avarice of the highest princes of the Church. How could she find fault with Luther if he assailed the extravagance, the selfishness, the lust for power of Rome? She could not go into the theological arguments Luther raised, which were beyond her youthful grasp. But she could not blame her good friend and councilor, Margrave George, if he called her attention to the fact that Luther was only saying what every right-thinking Christian thought and felt. As Brandenburg became more deeply convinced of the correctness of Luther's views, Mary's sympathy for the reformer grew, a sympathy which she also imparted to her faithful follower Lajos. The year the court had spent in Bohemia, the land of Huss, of Taborites and Utraquists, of countless religious groups, all laboring in principle to cleanse the Church of the stains that clung to her, had been a year of great significance in Mary's spiritual development. It did not escape her that not the most superficial and easy-going among her courtiers gratefully admired Luther's courage, but the best and most virtuous. But Brandenburg's influence counted most, and this came to light before the court left Prague to return to Hungary, when Lajos appointed a number of Lutherans and Utraquists to high office. During his sojourn in Bohemia Brandenburg seemed to have ranged himself definitely on Luther's side.

Ruling circles in Hungary, however, were of a different mind. There the hated German colonists, the German preachers, supported and spread Luther's teaching, and this in itself was enough to imbue the Hungarian people and above all the Hungarian nobility with a wholehearted aversion to the new doctrines. Already in 1521 the minor King had been compelled to order that the dangerous Lutheran teachings should everywhere be opposed, as the Papal Bull prescribed. When the court had returned from Prague in 1523, however, it soon became apparent what a change had taken place in the royal couple's views. Margrave George made no secret of his decision to take Luther's side, and the Queen her-

self wished to appoint a Bohemian pastor, Dr. Johannes Hess, who had been in contact with the University of Wittenberg since 1519, as her court preacher.¹⁷ She found a still more suitable candidate, however, in Conrad Cordatus, and by the summer of 1524 this friend and defender of Luther entered upon his duties as protagonist of the "Gospel" at the court of Buda.

By 1523 rumors circulated through Europe that many Lutherans were enjoying the favor of the young Hungarian king and queen.¹⁸ Protests were heard from the Hungarians themselves. Shortly after Cordatus had taken up his post, a positive scandal broke out which definitely compromised the Queen in the eyes of her Catholic subjects. In the presence of the whole court, and even of Burgio, the papal Nuntius, Cordatus indulged in a violent attack on the Pope and the Cardinals. This was too much. The Catholic nobility revolted, and a profoundly shocked Burgio protested to Their Majesties. Somewhat frightened by the disturbance their Cordatus had created, they attempted to soothe the Nuntius with the promise that they would punish their preacher if he seemed to proclaim really heretical views.

But in an intimate circle Mary, whose autocratic character would tolerate no pressure from her subjects, even in matters of religion, expressed herself in quite another spirit.¹⁹ If the State Council wanted to turn out her court preacher, she, the Queen, would keep him in office. The investigation of Cordatus' convictions, with which the Archbishop of Esztergom, Ladislaus Szalkay, was charged, made no progress. For though Szalkay, whom the people called "the shoemaker bishop", occupied the highest ecclesiastical office in Hungary, he was a layman who had never been consecrated. The welfare of the Church did not trouble him. He was a politician and an adroit diplomat, concerned with his own advantage, and as a devoted servant of his weak-willed young King had learned where this advantage lay. Szalkay had no intention of displeasing the Queen by condemning her court preacher and postponed the matter indefinitely.

But this was too much for the Hungarian nobility. They appeared before the royal pair, and swore that they would tear to pieces with their own hands, and before Their Majesties' very eyes, the man who had dared to raise his godless voice against the Holy Father. Their passionate remonstrance impressed Mary. She saw that persistence might have fatal consequences. Cordatus

was dismissed, and his precipitous departure from Buda looked like flight. This time the anti-German Catholics had been victorious. But they had not succeeded in making their Queen change her mind. Her aversion to their lust for power stirred her anger to such a pitch that she lost sight of all caution and diplomacy. It was not so much the positive element of belief in Luther that determined her actions at this time, but rather a negative emotion: anger at her anti-German, anarchistic Hungarian subjects, who wanted to lay down the law to her, their Queen by the Grace of God. Burgio, an intelligent and moderate man, understood Mary's fierce reaction very well. He wrote to Rome that he thought he could still regard her as a good daughter of the Church. She protected the Germans in Hungary because they were her compatriots, not because they were Lutherans. The distance of centuries, which alone makes historical understanding possible, may even deepen the truth of Burgio's view. Not because they were her compatriots, nor because they followed Luther's teaching, did Mary so passionately support the Germans, but because they were the enemies of the Hungarian magnates, opposition to whom she came more and more to regard as a major task in her life.

It was not religious conviction that dominated Mary's youthful mind. Her religion was a quiet, familiar habit rather than the profoundly stirring experience revealed to Luther and his followers. She felt safe and sheltered as a good daughter of the Church, but she was too much a child of the Renaissance, with its intense gusto and joy of living, for her religion to be the fulfilment of her life. Her aim was rather to control the present, not to prepare herself for a hereafter which she could not visualize. She was familiar with the outer forms of her religion and felt supported by it in the heavy task God had laid upon her. But the love of the gospel would never warm her soul. She knew the God of Vengeance. The God of Love always remained unknown to her.

She was worldly and frivolous in these days, and certainly not devout in the spirit of the deeply serious Lutheran confession. Her lighthearted attitude is shown by a single brief letter in which she appears as the carefree child she was when her enemies did not provoke her pride. To Albrecht of Brandenburg, Grand Master of the German Order, who had spent some

time at her court in Prague and with whom she had frequently exchanged thoughts on the ideas his brother, Margrave George, already openly proclaimed, she wrote on June 25, 1523: ²⁰

* "Dear naughty Cousin—I believe you must have forgotten your Godfearing Cousin, you have not written for so long now. I have not forgotten you in my pious prayers. I have prayed God every day that he may make you as devout as I am. I beg that you will write me whether my prayers have helped or not? If they have not helped, should you want to buy a pennyworth or two of piety from me, I will gladly sell it to you, for I have much too much piety. I would gladly write you more, but I must go and dine in your brother Margrave George's garden, and the messenger will not wait any longer. Written in Ofen in haste on the Sunday after our Corpus Christi Day in the year XXIIIrd, your pious Cousin Mary."

Amusing, but imperious, the Italians called her. The first quality we have no way of pinning down; it remains intangible as the play of sunlight on clouds in spring. Nor can we record her need of affection, her sensibilities, the emotions her position in the world forbade her to express, the comfort she found in the adoration of her playmate Lajos, or in music, which she loved. Only the pride, the hardness and the fearless courage which in the years to come were always characteristic of Mary of Hungary provide the material for the picture history was to paint of her.

* "Liber, pöser Vetter—Ich glaub Ir habt die frumme Mum gar vergessen, dass Ir nun so lang nit geschriben habet. Ich hab Euch in mein andechtig Gepet nit fergessen. Ich hab Gott alle Tag fleissiglich gepeten, dass er Euch well frumm machen als ich pin. Ich pitt Euch Ir wellt mir schreiben ob mein Gepet geholffen hat oder nit? Wo es nit geholffen hat, wollt Ir mir um ein Pfennich oder zwen Frumkait abkaufen, Vill ichs Euch gern verkaufen, wenn ich hab vil zu vil Frummkait. Ich wollt Euch gern mer schreiben, so muss ich in Eures Bruders Marggraf Jorg Garten gen essen, so will der Pot nit lenger warten. Datum Ofen eilens am Sunntag nach unsers Herrn Fronleichnamstag anno Di im XXIIIten, Euere frumme Mum Maria."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Downfall



Qui non sono Capitani, qui non sono denari, qui non è consiglio, qui non sono navi, qui non è ordine.

There are no Captains here, there is no money, there is no counsel, there are no ships, there is no order.

Burgio to the Curia,
July 10th, 1526¹

IN any environment Mary's pride would have been hurt by the ambition of those around her, but none was more certainly predestined to harden her than this court of Buda, whither she had come to command and where she learned that she was powerless. But her first months in Hungary had already taught her that, young and inexperienced though she was, she too could achieve victory if only she remained firm in her own convictions and decisions. As she came to know her surroundings better, to distinguish the different groups and their leaders by their motives and slogans, especially as she came to realize the helplessness of her "angelic" young husband, she became conscious of a task and, in the first place perhaps, she felt the irresistible desire to fight.

Her first support had come from the two men indicated by birth and position to assist her: Brandenburg and her brother Charles' representative, da Burgo. When the latter was charged with another mission it was his successor, Dr. Johannes Schnaitpeck, who confirmed her in her dislike of the Hungarians—and also in her extravagance.² He it was who encouraged her

to contract debts and, probably not without selfish motives, put her in touch with the moneylenders who were prepared to furnish funds to their queen. Mary's relationship with this slippery, unreliable man, who was suspected of all sorts of questionable transactions, increased the anti-German feelings of the Hungarians to a passionate hatred. Already the Diet of 1524 struck the note that was to resound so much more violently the following year: Away with all German courtiers, away with the Imperial Ambassador!

It was in this always rather noisy Hungarian Diet that the revolt against the "German" Queen and her entourage found its principal expression. In the meeting held after the return of the royal couple from Bohemia, a strict investigation had been set up into the manner in which the war tax voted in 1521 had been levied and spent. The result was most distressing.³ It appeared that the counties had contributed barely half their quota and out of the entire aristocracy only two noblemen, one of them the pretender to the throne, Zápolya, had paid theirs. District governors appeared to have collected funds and not to have handed them over, nobles and soldiers had accepted pay but rendered no military service. The Paladine Stephan Báthory was accused of having spent 700,000 ducats for recruiting troops and had only raised 500 horsemen.⁴ His brother, Andreas, was rumored to have had 300,000 ducats of false money coined. These last complaints were brought in by Zápolya, who could not be charged with a single offense and whose influence grew with every reproach he was able to fling at others.

Such were the conditions in torn and miserable Hungary when in 1524, the new Pope, Clement VII, decided to attempt to organize the country against the Turks, who, after their conquest of Rhodes, were preparing a great attack upon Western Europe. The two papal ambassadors, Burgio and Cardinal Campeggio, were given a considerable sum deposited in the Fugger offices at Buda, which they were to use at their own discretion for Hungary's defense. But they faced a hopeless task. It was not primarily lack of money that threatened Hungary's downfall. After trying for a year to bring order into the shocking confusion, Burgio wrote to the Curia that if Hungary could be rescued from the abyss by means of three guilders, it would be impossible to find three men willing to make such a sacrifice for their country.⁵ Hungary was going under through division,

selfishness and dissension. Even the decisions of the Diet of 1524 could no longer bring about any change.⁶

Stephan Verböczy, one of the few honorable figures of this corrupt time, described to this Diet in passionate words the country's hopeless condition. Once more those present were carried away into making far-reaching demands. Before the next summer there should be a meeting of the Diet at Hatvan, at which every nobleman must appear armed and with his whole fighting force, so that they might be able to move against the enemy immediately afterward. Those who stayed away were to forfeit their possessions and their titles. The King should form a crown council, independent of the existing State council, which together with him should exercise unlimited authority. All foreigners should be dismissed from the court. The German Fuggers, who as lessees of the mines and the mint were exploiting the country, should be driven out. The deputy-treasurer Szerencsés, a baptized Jew, who had had coins of half value minted, should be dismissed. And from the excited gathering the cry went up: Extermination for the Lutherans, prison and the stake for all heretics!

Lajos did not resist the storm. He avoided the difficulties, did not ratify the decisions, and agreed only to have the most necessary measures carried out. The rest he would lay before the new Diet he himself would presently convene. In this manner the government attempted to forestall the armed meeting at Hatvan, from which it expected the worst—revolution.

But while Lajos followed the counsel of his advisers, the conviction awoke in Mary that she herself was the one person to create order out of this chaos. It is possible that Burgio drew her attention to the task awaiting her. He wrote to Rome that only one thing could save Hungary: if the Queen were set upon the right path by an imperial ambassador.⁷ Yet things were to get even worse before Mary attempted to take control. In May 1525 the Diet met again on the field of Rákos, near the capital. The nobles were armed and even at the start were in a menacing frame of mind. They demanded that the decisions of the previous meeting should promptly be carried out. A deputation of sixty went to the King, who had not appeared at the meeting, and laid four points before him: All German courtiers were to be dismissed within four days; the imperial and Venetian ambassadors would have to go, being spies; Szalkay should be

removed; they even demanded that Szerencsés be burned at the stake. If the King agreed to these four points, the Estates would vote new taxes. If he refused, the deputation could not be responsible for the consequences. Above all, the German courtiers would then have some exciting experiences.

Mary stood firm, defending her fellow-countrymen and Szerencsés, who had often helped her. To prevent the worst, Szerencsés had been taken prisoner—but at the Queen's command he was released and conducted home with almost royal respect. Mary, however, had underestimated the anger of her opponents. The nobles left the Diet in a rage, stormed Szerencsés' house, which was plundered. They also sought to vent their anger on Szalkay's palace, but it was defended by artillery and the attack failed. In revenge they flung themselves upon the Jewish quarter, which was totally pillaged. A sight, the Venetian ambassador wrote to his government, that made one think of the destruction of Troy.⁸ Campeggio, the Nuncio, fearing still worse, barricaded his house. His colleague Burgio kept watch in the castle, dreading a surprise attack on the king and queen.

Still Mary would not yield. She again forbade the armed meeting at Hatvan. While Lajos endeavored to calm the agitation by reporting that he had begun to dismiss the German courtiers, she sought contact with a group of magnates who wished to break the growing influence of Zápolya and Verböczi.

But in vain. As the time approached for the show of arms at Hatvan, it became clear that the nobles would pay no attention to the royal ban. Relations were strained to the utmost. Hungary appeared to be on the verge of a civil war, while the Turks were mobilizing and the governors of the Hungarian border provinces were doomed to look idly on, or in despair thought of surrendering to the Sultan.

It was the crafty Szalkay who somehow managed to bring the Queen and the magnates allied with her to a perplexing volte-face by which perhaps the country, but in any case his own position, might be saved. He proposed to her that she should become the leader of the Zápolya party, which had an overwhelming majority in the Diet and which would surely grasp the sword of revolution at Hatvan unless the King—in the person of the Queen—placed himself at its head. Zápolya and Verböczi had already been won over to the plan. In a union

with the Queen they both saw the only possibility of still saving Hungary at this last moment from total collapse.

Mary saw her chance. She did not lack the courage to take the consequences of such a change of front. The Venetian ambassador, Guidotto, said of her at this time that she had the heart to do anything: "*Ha core di far ogni cosa*".⁹ And Erasmus' friend, Johannes Heckel, who was soon to become her court preacher, wrote of her in the spring of that dramatic year 1525: "If she could only be changed into a king, our affairs would be in better shape." She did not even lack the strength to sacrifice her most faithful friend, George of Brandenburg, to her new policy at Zápolya's demand. The Margrave was obliged to leave Buda immediately. At the same moment the hated Schnaitpeck slipped out of the city like a thief in the night. Nor were these the only two. During the prelude to these events a number of German courtiers decided to flee the turbulent capital where they no longer felt safe. Guidotto, who was looked upon as a Turkish spy, arranged to be hastily recalled. The royal entourage changed its aspect completely. The foremost officials of the crown fell victims to the new policy: Báthory, the paladine; Ambrus Sárkány, the court judge, the man from whom Mary, at Innsbruck, had received her first impressions of her new subjects; the treasurer Alexius Thurzó, who for years had been unable to refuse her any luxury. Thurzó was related to those formidable bankers, the Fuggers, and was accused of huge embezzlements in collaboration with them. On June 22, the Fugger properties were confiscated, and at last the Queen obtained control of the income from the mines, which belonged to her appanage and had been leased to the Fuggers. Exploitation of the mines was now confided to none other than that same Szerencsés whom the previous Diet had wished to burn and who now promised that under his management the mines should bring in untold wealth.

When all the demands of Zápolya and his followers had been met in this manner, the show of arms by the nobles at Hatvan became a harmless parade at which no revolutionary slogans were heard, only cries of delight at the arrival of the young King, who had gone thither on a safe-conduct from Zápolya after borrowing 4,000 guilders from the Papal Nuncio for the costs of the journey. Verböczy was named paladine, and new war taxes

were voted, of which one-quarter was promised to Queen Mary as a present in appreciation of her cooperative attitude.

But all these reciprocal testimonials of friendship were only pretense. Zápolya's power was now unlimited and more than ever the Queen feared a coup d'état which would rob Lajos of his title and herself of her freedom of action. The Nuntius, who at first had encouraged the union of the two parties, now saw what might be the results of Zápolya's triumph.¹⁰ He informed the Curia that they wanted to send King Lajos to some "sovereignty in the other world", after which Zápolya's plan would be to succeed him and marry Queen Mary. The dismissed and defeated magnates did what they could to emphasize such rumors and to persuade Mary that she could not consider herself safe for another moment. On all sides she looked for help. She asked the Polish ambassador for a personal meeting with Lajos's uncle, King Sigismund. To her brother Ferdinand she also sent an urgent appeal to be present at this meeting. Both rulers accepted the invitation in principle, but postponed the conference to the following year. Throughout the country the threat of revolution constantly grew. Rumors circulated that Zápolya had allied himself with dissident Bohemians who would support him in seizing the crown.

In this extremely perilous situation, which might any day lead to catastrophe, Mary began to prepare her own coup d'état. She found a collaborator in Báthory, the dismissed palatine, who wished to be reinstated in office. Thurzó, the dismissed treasurer, also joined the conspiracy, which called itself "Kalandos", "The Adventurous". Propaganda was made for the alliance with money and promises, and the queen allowed herself to be carried along on the assurance that at the next Diet the royal power would be restored. Many nobles, who in their enthusiasm had expected Verböczy to rescue Hungary instantly, were disappointed in their leader and lent an ear to the whisperings of the Kalandos brotherhood.

When the next Diet met at Buda in April 1526, Verböczy was obliged to realize that his following had fallen away and that his own life was in danger. He laid down his office of palatine, which he had never desired, and was barely able to save himself by hasty flight before Báthory could have him arrested.

Thus one of the few men ready to sacrifice himself for his

country was branded as traitor and driven into exile. Zápolya was able at this gathering to influence the votes in his own favor by distributing huge sums from his unlimited wealth. No one dared accuse him. The fall of Verböczy was a sufficient success for the Kalandos brotherhood as well. They were only interested in resuming their former way of life, and a few days after their victory they had forgotten their promises to the queen to vote another high war tax. On the contrary, they now demanded that the court's expenditures be checked every quarter by a commission to be appointed from their own number. Was this the restoration of royal power they had promised the queen? In anger Mary seized the document in which this demand was laid down, crossed out the article limiting her authority and her expenditure, and wrote in the margin with energetic hand: "Unus Rex, Unus Princeps".¹¹

This passionate expression on her part suggested a new policy to the magnates. They now granted Lajos the most absolute power and therewith relieved themselves of all responsibility for the disaster that could no longer be avoided anyway. While in theory Lajos now did not lack authority, he totally lacked the money to carry out the plans for defense with which the Diet had closed its session. On that occasion the Estates had called the foreign ambassadors to witness that they wished nothing more ardently than to stand by the King in defending the country, while Lajos had declared before the same gentlemen that poverty made him impotent, so that he could not be considered guilty if the country went under.

"This comedy", Burgio wrote to Rome, "the King and his subjects enacted with reciprocal declarations of innocence, at the very moment when the clouds of a destructive storm were piling up and the monstrous armies of Suleiman were nearing the borders. . . . They pressed the King to move against the enemy with his army, and the King had not even a serviceable pair of boots." ¹²

It seemed that even Nature herself arranged terrifying phenomena to prepare the Hungarians for their destruction. Starvation, floods, and pestilence had ravaged the country in recent years.¹³ The population lived in continual unrest. Even from regions to which the marauding Turkish bands did not penetrate, the inhabitants fled elsewhere because of epidemics or floods.

Rich people left the country or at least sent their most valuable possessions to safer regions. In that awful summer of 1525 Buda was swept by a thunderstorm the like of which had not occurred within the memory of man. Lightning destroyed the towers of Szalkay's palace, ripping off the word "Episcopus" from the shield over the gate. A cloudburst descended on the frightened city.

On April 23, 1526, Sultan Suleiman set out from Constantinople with more than 100,000 troops and three hundred pieces of artillery—an army, as a Venetian merchant in Buda wrote to a relative in his native city, sufficient to exterminate the entire world.¹⁴ His Majesty the King had gone to meet the enemy, but as yet nothing had been accomplished, for the reason that "the Hungarians are divided amongst themselves, and one assumes that they would rather do battle with each other than against the enemy."

Under these conditions the Pope's urgent letters to all Christian rulers to lay aside their feuds and take the field together against Islam were useless. Europe was divided, as Hungary was divided, the young rulers at the head of their national states detesting each other and wishing only each other's destruction. Francis I of France had even allied himself with the Sultan and demanded the annihilation of Hungary, whereby his hated rival, Emperor Charles, would be threatened by the arch-enemy of Christendom at the very borders of the German Empire.

Thus Hungary stood alone against the formidable Turk, a powerless country, without generals, without money, without ships, without order, as Burgio wrote to the Curia on July 10; and he added with bitter resignation that in his view just so much of Hungary would remain as the enemy chose to leave. What could a mutinous army do, which had to fight without money? What could King Lajos accomplish, who confessed to the Nuncio at this time that he feared "the Turks of Hungary" more than those of Constantinople?¹⁵ Even if he had been capable of leading a country in its hour of need, he could not have prevented its fate. Nineteen-year-old Lajos was not the man to play a part in such an epoch. He still continued his pleasure-seeking, careless way of life. While the Turkish armies approached, the young King continued his habit of lying in bed until noon and then spending his day hunting. At the meetings of the State Council he appeared late or not at all. And although the State Council



Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Lajos II of Hungary as a child, by Bernard Striegel.



Society of Antiquaries, London
Mary of Hungary, aged fifteen, by Hans Maler.



Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
Lajos II of Hungary, by Hans Krell.



Alte Pinakothek, Munich
Mary of Hungary, aged nineteen, by Hans Krell.

met daily, it wasted its time in spiteful quarrels and insignificant differences of opinion.

What was done in the end to save the country? Archbishop Tomory, one of the few outstanding men Hungary possessed, was entrusted with the defense of the border fortress of Petervár (Peterwardein) and the other castles nearby. But he had only a mere thousand infantry and five hundred cavalry at his disposal, and so little money that the garrison troops threatened to desert because they received no pay. His desperate appeal for funds brought the impotent government at Buda to a decision. The gold and silver church treasures should be turned into coins. With what result? Countless ecclesiastics withheld their valuables, the persons charged with the collection reserved a part of the harvest for themselves, even Mary seems to have kept back a few very beautiful pieces. And what did get melted down and minted was just sufficient to pay the salaries of the palatine and other servants of the crown and to cover the garrison pay of a few fortresses.

Still no commander had been found who could organize a Hungarian army out of the scattered bands of nobles, the troops of armed burghers and farmers, who had gathered here and there after the bloody sword had again been carried through the counties as a sign of the fatherland's extreme danger. Not a single general dared assume responsibility for such a hopeless undertaking.

Meanwhile Sultan Suleiman was building the first bridge across the Sava, one of Hungary's natural defenses.¹⁶ Heavy rains and floods hindered the work of his soldiers. The Nuntius reported to Rome: "The Sava remembers that, as a faithful guardian, it is her duty to protect the country. God and the Holy Virgin fight for us!"¹⁷ The reverses encountered by the enemy caused wild enthusiasm amongst the Hungarians. Were they not a nation of heroes who had crossed swords through the centuries with the Heathen? What could even a tenfold Turkish superiority do against the bravery of the Magyars? How hard the braggart sultan was already finding it to cover the distance from Belgrade to Petervár! And in their misguided recklessness they forgot that not Hungarian legions but violent rains were hampering the Turkish advance. Even the shrewd Tomory, obliged to defend Petervár with his thousand men, lost sight of the situation. He reported to Buda how the Turkish Commander, Grand

Vizier Ibrahim, who had reached the fortification, boasted that the city was a mere mouthful, just enough for his breakfast. "If your Majesty so desires," the Archbishop-General wrote to King Lajos, "he can also have his noon and his evening meal under the walls of the fort." Even Lajos was roused from his indolence by these heroic words. He would take the field, he cried, even if he had but his shirt to go in. Tomory needed ten thousand men to rescue Petervárad? He, the King himself, would hasten to the city's help.

On July 20, 1526, Lajos at last left Buda in the company of the Queen, the Paladine, Archbishop Szalkay, the chancellor Brodarics and other gentlemen. The forces he had gathered in the meantime consisted of three thousand men. Slowly they marched south, in order to give the nobles with their armed bands the time to join them. For two days Mary accompanied her husband. Then, in the castle of Ambrus Sárkány on the island of Csepel, where they had so often pursued their beloved sport of hunting, came the farewell. Mary returned to Buda with a bodyguard of a couple of hundred armed men. Burgio also remained behind in order to collect money and recruit troops. The miniature army led by its brave but helpless king moved on southward to meet the Sultan.

Instead of the ten thousand who might perhaps have been able to achieve something, only a few hundred armed men joined the royal troops. Then came news of the fall of Petervárad. Hungary lay open to Turkish attack. In an order of the day the Sultan had told his soldiers that their objective now was Buda itself; the great massed armies had already started to move in the direction of Eszek.

On August 16 Archbishop Tomory, with the few thousand soldiers and burghers who had been able to escape the disaster of Petervárad, arrived in the royal army camp at Bába. A council of war was held. And though Tomory begged them in tears not to burden him, an ecclesiastic, with the responsibility for such important military activities, he was nevertheless appointed commander-in-chief. It was decided to set up camp in the neighborhood of Mohács and there to await the enemy, in the hope that Zápolya would shortly join the royal army with his nationalist forces.

Once again the Hungarians showed their propensity for losing sight of reality whenever they came together armed and in great

numbers. Blind recklessness and a wild fighting spirit took possession of the diminutive army. The five thousand men Tomory had been able to bring together refused to move a few miles north to join the troops of the King. Their own camp lay closer to the approaching Turks, they declared, and their going to join the other army would imply a shameful retreat. They wanted to attack and they would not withdraw a single step. Their officers appeared uninvited at the war council in their glittering armor and plumed helmets. They begged, nay, threatened the King that they might attack at once. Had not refugees from the Turkish camp reported that the greater part of the heathen army consisted of cowardly rabble? That not more than a twentieth of their hordes was armed? Nor was it necessary to fear the hundreds of guns the Turks were bringing along, so the spies had declared. The gunners serving them were principally Germans and Italians who would turn their cannon on the enemy of Christendom the moment the battle trumpets sounded. Why wait for Zápolya's troops? Twenty thousand Hungarians faced three hundred thousand Turks. Would not every Magyar hero with joy tackle twenty heathen? God would not desert His champions! The victory was already theirs.

The army commanders, just as thoughtless as the excited mass of their soldiers, let themselves be carried away by this firm conviction, this lust for battle. It was decided to wait no longer, but to attack immediately. And as the tumultuous council of war broke up, the ironic voice of the Bishop of Nagyvárád, famed for his wit, was heard saying to the King: "On the day of the battle twenty thousand Hungarians with brother Tomory will enter heaven as martyrs to the Faith. Should not your Majesty request the Pope already to record that day in the missal as the feast of the twenty thousand Hungarian martyrs?"

On August 29 a cloudless summer sky lay radiant over the wide plain of Mohács. At break of day the Hungarian commanders had drawn up their troops in battle order along as broad a front as possible. Their numbers had increased slightly in the last few days so that about twenty-eight thousand Hungarians were preparing to defend their country against a tenfold enemy. In the rear a thousand armored horsemen formed a square, in the center of which the court judge, János Drágfy, bore the royal standard.

When the divisions had occupied their positions, the palatine accompanied King Lajos through the ranks of his men, encouraging them to follow the example of their young ruler and to fight as their forefathers had fought earlier against the Turks. Lajos also addressed the troops himself. But a gloomy premonition oppressed him. As he returned to the place in the fourth row of the second battle line where his bodyguard stood, his chief cook asked him whether he would take his midday meal in the camp or in the village. Lajos shrugged his shoulders. "God knows," he answered wearily, "where we shall eat today."

Exhausting hours passed in waiting. The Turkish troops, known to be encamped behind the hills, did not show themselves. The August sun burned down on helmets and cuirasses, and sweat ran down the legs of the heavily armored horses, trembling with fatigue. Their riders had dismounted and lay limply on the ground. Above the hills the heat vibrated and on the horizon blue thunderclouds were piling up in menacing beauty.

Then, at three in the afternoon, out of the valley of Mohács the first Turkish riders appear, and simultaneously the Hungarian trumpets announcing the attack echo over the plain. The troops raise their battle cry: "Jesus, Jesus!" Lajos, deathly pale with emotion, tells the officers of his bodyguard to set the heavy gilded battle helmet on his head and mounts his armor-clad charger. Already the Hungarian cavalry on the left flank thunders towards the enemy, who now also shows himself upon the hills which the Hungarian generals have failed to occupy with troops.

An officer rushes up to the King. The advancing Hungarian horse already have the upper hand, an assault by the main troops should bring victory. Lajos follows this hint. With his bodyguard, of whom thirty-three knights have dedicated themselves to death to strike the Sultan himself, he flings himself upon the ranks of Janissaries surrounding Suleiman. Like devils the armed figures cut themselves a path with their flashing swords through the picked Turkish troops. Three of the heroes reach the Sultan, officers of his bodyguard fall beneath their blows. But Turkish scimitars slash at the tendons of their battle chargers and they fall in sight of the foremost enemy of Christendom.

Then from more than three hundred cannon, chained together, the first salvo breaks forth upon the approaching Hungarian horsemen, who are not more than ten paces from the guns. Horses and riders crash to the ground, a thick fog of smoke and

dust covers the battlefield, indescribable confusion overcomes the galloping squadrons. Then follows the Turkish flank-attack which is to cause the defeat of the heroic Hungarians. They fight on, surrounded by an overwhelmingly superior force, but their fate is sealed. Only a few succeed in escaping their pursuers at the fall of evening in the heavy downpour of a cloudburst. Only a few . . .

Ulrich Czettricz, one of the King's chamberlains, had not left Lajos' side during the assault that was supposed to bring victory to the Hungarians. But when their thundering gallop was checked by the murderous fire of the Turkish guns, he made it clear to his king that he should fall back. With two followers Lajos withdrew from the battle, riding away from the field where Hungary was bleeding to death under the Turkish scimitars. The storm that had long been threatening on the horizon now soaked the ground with a violent downpour. The shallow, muddy creek of Csele had scarcely seemed to form a serious obstacle on the way north. Czettricz had already safely reached the other side. Lajos followed him. But his heavily armored horse, wounded and dead tired, lost its footing in the mud of the bank. Reared at the vigorous pressure of the spurs. And fell over backwards in the shallow stream, smothering its helpless rider in the mud. In vain Stephan Aczél sprang to Lajos' assistance. He too disappeared in the mire. Helpless on the far side, Czettricz was obliged to witness the inglorious death of his king.

Only next day did the Turks discover that what they had defeated in an hour and a half's battle was the entire Hungarian army. Twenty-four thousand men had fallen. Practically the whole of Hungary's nobility had perished and of the country's ten bishops, seven had lost their lives at Mohács, among them the archbishops Tomory and Szalkay.

On August 31 Suleiman throned in splendor on the battlefield, under the gold baldaquin of his tent, in front of which the heads of two thousand decapitated victims had been piled. He handed out rewards to his viziers and generals, and gave permission to plunder. Mohács was laid in ashes, thousands of Hungarians were dragged to the Turkish camp from nearby villages. A few days later the Sultan ordered all the men to be put to the sword and in the following massacre four thousand Hungarian

burghers met a martyr's death. The women were sent back to the burned and ravaged villages to meet a certain end by starvation. And the Turkish army began to move once again on its march to Buda.

Meanwhile the country, and Mary also, remained in uncertainty of its army's fate. Astrologers had made contradictory forecasts, their pronouncements had become rumors, the rumors truths with which people encouraged each other or confirmed their despair. It was said that the Turkish army suffered from starvation, that blood had rained upon their camp.¹⁸ In one part of Hungary the story went that the Hungarians had been victorious, and great bonfires flared in the market-places of a few towns.¹⁹ But their blaze was soon extinguished. It became known what disaster had struck the country, and everyone knew that nothing in the world could now rescue Hungary from the most cruel fate that can befall a nation.

On August 30, the day after the defeat at Mohács, the terrible news reached the capital, and Mary learned that nothing certain was known concerning the king's fate. Refugees had reported that he had got safely across the border, others declared with equal assurance that he had been murdered by János Zápolya.²⁰ Only one thing was sure: The Sultan was approaching Buda, and between Buda and the Turkish armies stood not a single defended fortress, not a single regiment to protect the city. Only flight could bring safety.

Everything in Mary revolted against the necessity that she, a descendant of Europe's great heroes, should have to flee. But she saw very well that it would be of no use to stay. She would at least try to preserve the appearance of a voluntary journey. Her master of the hunt received orders to prepare the falcons and the dogs for a hunting expedition on which the Queen wished to start at crack of dawn. So at three next morning Mary left the city accompanied by her maids in waiting, with her falcon on her wrist and her hounds running to and fro—not a broken, expelled queen, but a huntress, proudly mounted, enjoying her favorite sport.²¹

But the Buda she left was a doomed city and Mary knew it. She had collected what the fever of the moment allowed her to save: a few of her holiest relics, a few treasures from King Matthias' library, among them the *Codex aurea*, the famous

missal.²² And all the silver money which Thurzó, the treasurer, could bring together. After the departure of the royal hunting party, heavily laden ships rowed up the Danube with the luggage for this tragic journey. Then the anxious townsfolk realized what the Queen's hunt had really meant: that Buda was lost.

During the first few days of September countless vessels bearing the goods and chattels of the citizens of Buda covered the broad Danube, hundreds of oarsmen struggled upstream against the current that lapped against the keels as it flowed toward the south, where the smoke of burning villages already dimmed the horizon.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Great-hearted Lady



... et vous supplie, Mme, comme à dame de grant cœur, vous consoler et conforter, car à l'adversité cognoit on les vertueusses personnes.

... And I beg you, Madam, as a lady of great heart, comfort and console yourself, for in adversity does one know a person's virtue.

Ferdinand to Mary,
September 8, 1526¹

THE Turkish army's violence raged across the defenseless Hungarian country like a prairie fire.

In Buda only fifty archers had remained behind to defend the royal castle, and in their despair the helpless inhabitants decided to send the keys of the city to the approaching conqueror. Suleiman promised to spare the royal residence—but on the fourth day after his entry one half of the city went up in flames, on the following day the rest. Only the castle, which the Sultan had taken over, did not fall victim to the fire.

From the capital the Turkish hordes went forth, plundering, murdering, burning, to the very borders of Austria and Steyermark. The burghers of Pécs had also sent the keys of their city to the Turks, receiving the promise that no harm should come to them. Three days after the occupation the Turkish commander called all the inhabitants together in the market place, and there young and old gathered in good faith. Then began the conquerors' blood feast, and of the whole population of Pécs not even a child escaped death.

The fate of Hungary's women in these disastrous months is

hardly to be described. They were sold or exchanged or handed on as presents from one Turkish violator to the next, only to end by the same bloody sword by which their sisters and daughters had been beheaded before their eyes.²

Against the barbarities of a treacherous enemy who broke every promise the Hungarians defended themselves where they could with unparalleled heroism. The city of Esztergom, deserted by its garrison, was saved by a simple soldier, Mihály Nagy, who incited the population to resistance. Refugee farmers and monks defended Visegrád, filling the breaches in the walls with their unarmed bodies. The city was spared. Between Dömös and Esztergom twenty-five thousand farmers from the surrounding country had hastily thrown up entrenchments within which they defended themselves and their families against the Turkish attacks, but the besiegers brought up guns and destroyed the mud walls, leaving not a single Hungarian alive.

It took a long time for all these terrible reports to reach Bratislava where the Queen had arrived with her little company after a perilous journey through a region disturbed by rumors that had destroyed all discipline. In the first village in which her tragic hunting party halted, Mary had taken time to write hasty notes to her brother Ferdinand and to one of the gentlemen of the Viennese court council, Baron Johan von Lamberg, in order to keep her brother's government informed of what was happening. In breathless sentences, without the official phrases which should adorn a royal correspondence, Mary wrote:

"Dear Mr Hans I cannot write you anything save that unfortunately the Turk has totally defeated my lord and husband In battle, and many people have been killed, as regards his dear person, I am told that he got Away God grant that it be true for I have no certain information about Him. I wish to warn you since my lord and brother Is not in his Austrian Domains, to warn the court councilors to look out well, for I fear the Turk will not stop at my lord brother's borders. I hope In 3 days to be not far from You as today I left Buda at 3 o'clock in the morning. Dear Mr Hans I know nothing else to write to you for You can imagine the situation I am In, but I must obey God's will and endure it. Dated Netzmüll the Friday after Bartholomew's [August 31] in the year 1526. Maria regina."³

On that first day of her journey she did not yet know the worst: that her husband was dead. And the immediate dangers

threatening her person prevented her at first from paying attention to what the future might bring. Now she was to learn more clearly than ever how little she was loved by the people over whom she ruled. During her flight she met only opposition and threats, nowhere sympathy or offers of assistance. She and her train were looked upon as outlaws. On her four days' journey she spent not less than 4,500 gold guilders in order to bind her companions to her, and even to the garrison of Esztergom, which shortly afterward shamefully deserted its post, she gave 330 gold guilders in an attempt to purchase their loyalty.⁴ All in vain. These same Hungarian hussars captured one of the ships carrying the queen's possessions to Bratislava, broke open the chests and dressed themselves in the clothes of Mary and her court ladies, dancing about in them in drunken fun.⁵ Like wild beasts they flung themselves upon their queen's belongings and upon the pitiable processions of refugees seeking safety in Esztergom. Burgio, the Nuntius, who had made the journey to Bratislava in Mary's company, was clearly justified in informing the Curia that he had managed to save himself "from the hands of Turks, Hungarians, and Germans."

In Bratislava, where Mary arrived on September 3, there was at least a semblance of security. The gentlemen of the city government sent the city messenger to meet her,⁶ and even this modest gesture of courtesy was a comfort to the hunted queen, who on earlier occasions had been met by all the city authorities at the head of the most notable burghers. An evening meal was even provided for the weary travelers at the city's expense. Ten carp, sixteen pike, a sheatfish and a quantity of smaller fish, together with two hundred buns and a bucket of country wine, were sent to the castle as a present. So long as the ships with the luggage had not arrived, however, Mary's lodging was scarcely habitable and it seems not unlikely that she herself, and in any case her attendants, slept the first nights upon straw in the empty apartments of the castle. But Mary was now at least no longer threatened by hostile farmers and mutinous troops. And any day there might come an answer from Hans von Lamberg to her cry for help—any day she might hear the tramp of the rescuing cavalry's hoofs, the rhythmic tread of the infantry, which her brother Ferdinand would certainly send to protect her. Mary resigned herself to wait—for help, for news of her husband.

The queen's note to von Lamberg had caused alarm and consternation in the Viennese court council. Its members met late into the night of September first, arranging for the measures it would be necessary to take if the Turks, as Mary suspected, did not halt at the Austrian border but threatened Vienna itself. A messenger left that same evening to inform Archduke Ferdinand, who was in Innsbruck, of "the sad and tragic news which not only the Hungarian crown and the honorable house of Austria, but also the Holy Roman Empire of German Name and the whole of Christianity will consider quite terrible."⁷ The gentlemen advised the Archduke that His Serene Highness should let nothing prevent him but should come in all haste to H.S.H.'s domain—"das sich E.F.D. gar nichts verhindern lassen, sonnder eilends und eilends in E.F.D. lannden kome"—after immediately having asked help from the German empire, from the Tyrol and from neighboring states. They had further decided instantly to send to the queen 1,000 or 1,500 foot-soldiers, as many as they could collect in a hurry, with a suitable man in command, and to advise her that she should not leave Hungary at this time, but remain in "Unggerland" at Bratislava or some other strong spot, "so that the kingdom does not fall away from us entirely and Your Serene Highness can the better come into Hungary with her help. But for this purpose, and that all this should be maintained, urgency demands that Y.S.H. should come in all haste."

The court council did not mention King Lajos and the fate that might have befallen him at Mohács. The meaning was clear. For in Vienna it was taken for granted that through the treaties entered into by his grandfather as well as through his marriage with Princess Anna of Hungary, Ferdinand was the legal heir to the Crown of St. Stephen. It was not necessary to say these things in so many words to make the young Archduke understand them.

Neither did Ferdinand, who had learned from his sister herself that her husband was said to have escaped, touch upon the other possibility in his first letter to Mary. It was a letter full of consoling words that he wrote to her from Innsbruck on September 8.⁸ It had been God's will, against which no one may revolt, "and I beg you, Madam, as a lady of great heart, to comfort and console yourself, for in adversity does one know a person's virtue . . ." In reply to Mary's supplication that he should come

immediately to Lower Austria, he assured her that he wished to collect money and troops in the Tyrol, and with God's help would reach Vienna within three or four days, not sleeping on the way, in order to make all possible haste—"et ne me endormiray en chemin, ains me hastare selon ma possibilité."

But comforting as Ferdinand's words might sound, they reached Mary shattered by the most cruel blow that could have struck her. Lajos' chamberlain, Czettricz, had ridden breathless into Bratislava shortly after the Queen's arrival and had described to her the disaster at Mohács, which had taken place before his very eyes.⁹ The agonizing uncertainty in which Mary had lived for the last few days was ended. But how much more bearable that torture had been, which still left room in her heart for hope, than the accomplished fact with which she was now faced: the loss of the only person to whom she belonged, the bitterness of his useless death, not even dignified by the glory of the battlefield. With heart-rending clarity she saw the scene Czettricz had witnessed: the frantically rearing horse, the shining figure of the armored knight standing up in his stirrups in a desperate attempt to restore balance—the treacherous, muddy water of unknown depth in which horse and rider had sunk out of sight. Not even the consolation of a hero's death against the enemies of the Faith, not even the conviction of a heroic sacrifice. A blind, senseless fate had befallen her and robbed her of everything. Of her playmate, her lover, her purpose in life, her crown.

The day after writing his first consolatory letter, Archduke Ferdinand received the news of Lajos's death, which entitled him to call the crown of Hungary his own. He immediately sent Mary another letter¹⁰ in which, while he repeated his words of sympathy, the accent lay upon the fact so important to Ferdinand, of his rights to the Hungarian throne. He feared that the King of Poland and the Voivode of Transylvania, Zápolya, would interfere in the matter, and Mary should understand that she would receive more help from Ferdinand than from them. After signing his letter he betrayed in a nervous postscript how uncertain he felt of his sister's loyalty. He begs her to show him that she is a good sister to him in this affair and for his part he will do the same—"Madame, je vous supplie me mustrer tour de bone seur en cest afaire et de ma part j'en faire le semblable."

Her brother's somewhat cool words of condolence may not

have lessened Mary's sorrow, but the businesslike end of his letter provided her with an aim of which, born ruler that she was, she fully understood the importance. To rescue Hungary from ruin meant to increase the power of her dynasty, and this her grandfather, Maximilian, had taught her to look upon as the highest purpose in life. Ferdinand should not appeal in vain to her sisterly feeling. Mary was prepared to stand by him, if only he would put her in a position to act. But the month of September was almost over and still the sole news that could bring her comfort, the news of Ferdinand's coming, had not reached her.

The troops sent by the Viennese court council had indeed arrived in Bratislava, and a letter¹¹ from the commander's son to Archduke Ferdinand tells us the circumstances and the frame of mind in which Mary was living during these weeks.* "Her Royal Highness has often asked me when Your Serene Highness will come and whether Y.S.H. will bring many people and how it is that Y.S.H. stays away so long. . . . Her Royal Highness is understandably very depressed, deserted by all Hungarians, there is nothing but poverty, sorrow, disorder and many are much frightened."

Mary's entourage consisted of the old paladine Stephan Báthory, Thurzó the treasurer, János Bornemissza, governor of the Castle of Buda, the chancellor Stephan Brodarics, Ferenc Batthyány, Bán of Croatia, the Bishops of Veszprém and Vác, her court preacher, János Henckel, her secretary Miklós Oláh, and Lajos' teacher, the humanist Piso. This was the little nucleus of followers with which, in a country laid waste by an overwhelming enemy, without money, without troops, practically deprived of the first necessities of life, she had to take in hand the defense of Ferdinand's claims to Hungary. Well might her brother remind her that she was a "lady of great heart and understanding." She would need all her courage, all her insight, and even then it was still questionable whether she would be able to achieve what was essential for Ferdinand's purpose: to form a pro-Habsburg party of Hungarian nobles which could bring about his election as King of the Magyars.

* "Hat Ir kuniglich wierrt Mich vill geffragt wan E.F.D. kume unndt ob E.F.D. vill volks pringe unndt wie es kume das E.F.D. so lang auspleyben . . . Ir kuniglich wierrt Ist ganz wie pillich pedrückt, von allen ungern verlassen, da ist nichts dan armutt, petrübñs, unordnung unndt meniglich ganz erschrocken."

It was clear against whom such a party would have to be directed. Neither Mary nor her few supporters had forgotten that Zápolya had come forward years ago as pretender to the throne and was looked upon by most of the nobility as the obvious king of Hungary. His absence from the fateful battle at Mohács might have been the result of contradictory orders from the government at Buda, but the possibility was not excluded that it had been intentional and that Zápolya had wished to keep his troops intact for future emergencies. Barely three weeks after the Hungarian defeat it was said in Venice that Zápolya would become king of Hungary and reinforce his claims through a marriage with the dowager queen, Mary.¹²

This rumor undoubtedly penetrated to Ferdinand and to Mary herself. But Mary had already too clearly signified her intentions to her brother for him to doubt her loyalty and devotion any longer. In the letter informing him of her husband's death she had not only pleaded once more for help, but also had offered to stand by him and advise him in so far as it lay within her power.¹³ Ferdinand had accepted her offer with both hands, well aware that his sister's experience in chaotic Hungary was indispensable to him if he wished to control the unfamiliar political situation. By September 11 he asked her to send him some of her trusted councilors, while six days later his own adviser, von Lamberg, started for Bratislava to hear Mary's opinion on the methods by which he and his spouse [Anna] might with the more speed and dignity come to receive the crown of Hungary and Bohemia as their hereditary right—"dardurch wir unnd unnser Gemachel dester eher und statlicher zu einnemung der cron zu Hungern und Behaim als unnser erbgerechtigkeit kumen mugen".¹⁴

Thus began Mary's new task—the continuation of what she had been striving for all this time: to rule over Hungary. But now her exertions no longer concerned the future of her young husband. For him she could no longer do anything save pray for the salvation of his soul. She expressed her grief at his loss by exchanging her costly dresses, her golden hairnets and her jeweled hats for the dull black of a widow's dress, the monastic austerity of a white coif. Her thin face from which all joy had vanished acquired an embittered sharpness that did not in the least fit her twenty-one years and that makes her first portrait

as a widow so painfully different from Krell's attractive picture of a few years before, with its air of thoughtful reticence.

One of her first acts was to call a diet at Komárom, where the Estates were to discuss the country's salvation "and other matters". She tried to checkmate Zápolya by commanding him in his capacity as Voivode of Transylvania to summon the diet in that city and there to await the arrival of her representatives. But Zápolya did not obey, thus openly entering the arena against the Dowager Queen and her brother.

Sultan Süleiman had not dared to spend the winter with his enormous armies in devastated, plundered Hungary. After ordering the famous library of King Matthias, the castle's art treasures, the antique statues of Hercules, Apollo and Diana to be placed aboard his Danube ships, he left the capital at the end of September and returned to Constantinople. Only in a few border fortresses did he leave behind a garrison. The country was not spared this last humiliation. It was not even considered capable of rising again.

Meanwhile Archduke Ferdinand had concentrated all his attention on Bohemia, where conditions were much less complicated, and where as Princess Anna's husband he had actually been chosen king on October 25. Of this rapid success he was preparing to make the most in his dealings with Hungary, when the little group in Bratislava heard that Zápolya had succeeded in assembling a large number of magnates, nobles and representatives of "royal" cities at a meeting at Tokay, where the necessity of immediately electing a king was discussed. Zápolya's faithful supporter Verböczy had named the Voivode as the man designated by God to be king over the Hungarians, and it had been decided to summon a diet on the fifth of November at Székesfehérvár, where Zápolya was to be elected and crowned.

Shortly after this news had reached Mary, one of Zápolya's followers arrived in Bratislava to beg her in the name of the whole Hungarian nation, as he said, to enter into marriage with the Voivode. Before deciding on this step Zápolya had, according to Ferdinand's ambassador in Cracow, sought the advice of King Sigismund of Poland, stating that in his own opinion much bloodshed could be avoided by such a union, although it seemed to him that Mary had been accustomed to rule without her former

husband, and was, moreover, unable to bear children—"wie woll es ihm schien sie wär gewont on [ohne] Ihren forigen Herrn Selbst zu regieren, wer auch dazu nich fruchtbar".¹⁵ But Mary indignantly rejected her enemy's proposal. "If I ever did such a thing, from which God protect me," she proudly replied to his envoy, "my brothers, the Emperor and Ferdinand, would regard me as their enemy. My brother Ferdinand has sworn that he is prepared to live and die for the crown of this kingdom. I cannot commit treason against my brother."

Yet Mary's refusal had not the slightest influence on Zápolya's further plans. He himself was one of the keepers of this same Crown of St. Stephen, and his colleague Perényi, tempted by the thought of succeeding Zápolya as Voivode of Transylvania, handed it over without more ado. Zápolya's troops, which might have saved the country at Mohács, were now sent out to occupy the most important cities, Buda, Székesfehérvár, Visegrád and Esztergom. Of what significance was it now that Mary addressed a manifesto to the Hungarian people telling them not to let themselves be misled by persons "who under the appearance of the public welfare were pursuing their own advantage"? No one paid any attention to this feeble sound, unaccompanied by the jingle of coins. Zápolya's star was rising and the hard-pressed "court" at Bratislava became daily more bitterly discouraged. It was learned that on November 9 the body of King Lajos, found by Zápolya's servants in a simple grave near Mohács, had been buried with great solemnity at Székesfehérvár. And that Zápolya himself had been chosen king by the vast majority of Hungarian nobles and crowned in that city with all traditional ceremony.

Was it to be wondered at that in these circumstances the spirits of Ferdinand's few adherents in Bratislava sank rapidly? They felt increasingly the pinch of their poverty; already they had been obliged to melt down the gold and silver utensils the Queen had been able to rescue from the disaster at Buda, in order to meet their daily expenses.¹⁶ From Ferdinand, whose champions they were, they seemed to receive only moral support. But could they pay their servants' wages with Ferdinand's promises that anyone who dared call Zápolya "King János" should be condemned to death? ¹⁷ Much more important to them was Zápolya's manifesto, in which those who would attend Mary's Diet would be stamped as traitors and have their property and

income confiscated. The palatine Báthory received a command from the new king to appear before him within two weeks if he wished to retain his office; if he remained in Bratislava he would be considered guilty of high treason and dealt with accordingly. How could Ferdinand protect his followers against such regulations? As they recognized his impotence more and more clearly, his partisans began to make higher demands for the present and for the future. Bornemissza, who had become governor of the castle, even refused entry to Ferdinand's troops so long as Ferdinand himself had not been elected and crowned King of Hungary. Mary put it only too clearly to her brother that the gentlemen in Bratislava would immediately go over to Zápolya if he did not consider their demands. Now that with much diplomacy she had succeeded in enlarging her brother's party, Ferdinand appeared to be unable to keep the promises she had felt obliged to make. Zápolya occupied the cities of Tata and Komárom, to which latter Mary had summoned her Diet. The manifesto in which she transferred the gathering to Bratislava meant another success for her opponents.

On December 1, 1526, Mary's Diet was opened in the presence of only a few magnates. A handful of lower nobility from the surrounding regions joined the gathering in the next few days. They came out of curiosity or to try their luck with Ferdinand, the offices of the Zápolya regime having already been promised. On December 16 this poor representation of the Hungarian nobility proceeded to elect a king. Ferdinand was not present, but his ambassadors gave the Diet the assurance that their master would use for the defense of Hungary not only his own power, but also the help which the Emperor and the German rulers would lend him.

Mary's Hungarian councilors supported the candidature of Ferdinand, his wife Anna, they said, being descended from the old Hungarian kings. Thereupon Báthory cast the first vote for Ferdinand of Austria, King of Bohemia, Infante of Spain, and the Emperor's representative in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. All those present followed his example and over Bratislava the triumphant thunder of the salvos echoed to announce to the people the choice of a King of Hungary.

Yet this festive sound did not bring Mary's anxieties to an end. She was only too well aware that this ceremony had been a hollow show and that Zápolya, chosen by the vast majority of

Hungarians and crowned in the sacred coronation city, could in addition count on the support of all leaders in the European arena who opposed the house of Habsburg. Venice had already received King János's ambassadors with honor. The Pope, who as ally of Francis I of France, was at war with Charles V and Archduke Ferdinand, would surely have congratulated Zápolya with greater warmth if the imperial troops in Italy had not moved as far as Piacenza, so that caution became imperative. The King of France, however, feeling himself less threatened, by a special embassy promised Zápolya his support and that of his allies, calling his election as King of Hungary a joyful event for the whole of Christendom. Nor did he leave it at polite words. He paid King János a monthly subsidy of 30,000 thaler and also persuaded the Pope to send him financial assistance.

Ferdinand, on the other hand, could only count on the Emperor's help, promised with great warmth, but only to be realized if Charles were in a position to make peace with his European enemies. Furthermore, affairs in Bohemia would have to be put in order, which could only be done if Ferdinand quickly went to Prague to have himself crowned after his election. Only after that could he concentrate his attention on Hungary. In the meantime he expected his sister Mary to guide Hungarian affairs in a favorable direction. And to make her realize fully the importance of her task, Ferdinand named her Regent of Hungary before his departure for Bohemia.

Presents in money and property were the only means of strengthening Ferdinand's small influence in Hungary. By the end of January 1527 Mary was able to inform him that she could turn the tide in his favor if only she had funds at her disposal. Zápolya's followers, she wrote, were already beginning to discover that their new king was greedy, ambitious, and unjust, and had misled them by his promises.¹⁸ They were already becoming disaffected, and the moment had arrived for Ferdinand to show his followers, both old and new, by liberality and kindness that they need not regret their decision. She needed money for her "practicques", as she called her negotiations, and her poverty was so great that she could not even pay spies to keep her informed of what went on in the enemy camp. If only she had funds she believed herself in a position to conquer Hungary for her brother without bloodshed. She warned him that at this moment he might reach results with one florin which later he would be

unable to achieve with many—"Vous poes asteure [à cette heure] faire quelque chose avec ung florin que après ne feres avec biau cop."

Plead as she might, the Archduke was unable to provide her with the necessary funds, and the tension of this desperate situation, which condemned her to idleness while opportunity for fruitful activity was continually arising, finally undermined Mary's health, already much weakened by sorrow. It was in these disastrous months in Bratislava that the first indications appeared of the ailment from which she was to suffer all her life and the symptoms of which she later described as a continual trembling of her heart—"un continuel tremblement de coeur".¹⁹ She realized that her work in Hungary was useless and that she was earning only reproaches and hatred. Was she not already accused by her followers of having won them to Ferdinand's side with promises which she now did not fulfill? What could she build on if her few faithful friends deserted her? At twenty-one the Dowager Queen of Hungary had not yet hardened to that intrepidity which was to be characteristic of her in later life. The burden had become too heavy for her young shoulders. On February 14, 1527, she asked Ferdinand to relieve her of her post.

From her rather hesitant and confused letter the Archduke received the impression that his sister did not feel safe in Bratislava, even lived in fear of her life. But to his reassuring words and his advice that she should choose herself some other place to live, Mary replied that she knew but one fear, namely that of inability to help her brother as befitted a good sister, and this only for lack of money. If Ferdinand could provide her with this, she knew no peril in which she would not place herself to do him profitable service—"je ne say pericle en quoy ne me vouldroie mectre pour vous pooir faire service profitable."²⁰

So she went on with her hopeless task. In order to bind to her the Bán of Croatia, Batthyány, who threatened to leave Bratislava, she borrowed 3,000 ducats in gold and 2,000 in cloth and other goods, begging Ferdinand to enable her to pay off the debt in time.²¹ The Bishop of Veszprém demanded a better bishopric and wished to see his own awarded to a nephew. The Palatine, too, had cast his eye upon Veszprém for a relative of his, but the bishop made it clear to Mary that her brother would surely have something better for the Palatine's nephew. Thus Ferdinand's

supporters tried to filch from each other the advantages they expected from their loyalty to Habsburg, a loyalty which appeared to last no longer than their hope of reward. Although the Queen had contracted debts in order to fulfill his demands, the Bán of Croatia nevertheless deserted the Archduke and in the spring of 1527 it looked as if the remaining gentlemen would follow his example. Mary wrote Ferdinand a depressed letter about this failure. The bitter disappointments she had experienced of late had again affected her health. The doctors thought a change of air would do her good, and she was longing to leave Bratislava, where she had known only sorrow and poverty and impotence.

But now Ferdinand preferred her to remain there. For after his coronation at Prague he had finally decided to conquer Hungary by force of arms. On July 31, 1527, he crossed the border near Kitsee at the head of his troops and was received with great honor by the Palatine. Within eight days he had taken Komárom, two days later, Tata. Three weeks after his arrival in Hungary, King Ferdinand rode into Buda without his soldiers' having had to fire a single shot.

What Mary had not been able to achieve in a year of negotiations now happened in a few weeks. The success of the Habsburg arms convinced magnates and high ecclesiastics of Ferdinand's rights to the Hungarian throne and they went over to him by the score. He wisely confirmed them in the offices his anti-king, Zápolya, had bestowed upon them, and the rumor of his generosity and clemency brought him countless more new followers. Zápolya withdrew behind the Theiss with the remains of his army and on October 9, 1527, Ferdinand's election as King of Hungary was ratified by the assembled Estates in the Castle of Buda.

Mary had passed these weeks at Bratislava in indescribable suspense, waiting for the couriers with letters from her brother which again and again reported new military and political successes. She learned from her sister-in-law Anna that Ferdinand had told his wife to hold herself ready to come to Buda. When would she, who had fought and suffered for her brother a whole year long, receive a similar invitation? But Ferdinand did not mention her journey, only wrote concerning the remnants of her table silver, which he wanted to convert into money for his military operations. Though she used it daily, Mary answered, she

would gladly hand it over to him, for not only this silver but anything she had, even to her chemise, she was prepared to give him, seeing his necessity—"car pas tant seulement ceste argentrie, mes ausy tout ce que j'ay jusques à la chemise seroie preste a vous bailler, voiant vostre necessité." ²² But even this fresh sacrifice did not bring home to Ferdinand how Mary longed to see her former residence again and the triumphant brother for whom she had endured so many worries and humiliations and who now was being acclaimed and honored in Buda.

At last, however, Ferdinand's letter of October 5, 1527, reached her, in which he bade her come to Buda as quickly as possible in the company of his wife, since his coronation as King of Hungary would shortly take place. Once more Mary boarded a small ship to make her journey along the eternal and unchanging Danube.²³ But now her boat was not decorated with cloth of gold and purple and precious tapestries, like the one in which she had traveled as a bride. Mourning pennants fluttered at the mast-heads, the walls were hung with black, and her small cabin was lined with black cloth. Before this gloomy vessel sailed the purple boat of the new queen Anna, who was to see Buda again, the city of her birth, after twelve years' absence.

On October 29 Ferdinand journeyed to Székesfehérvár with his wife and his sister. Under a golden baldaquin borne by dignitaries of the Church he rode into the coronation city between the two queens—Anna in a magnificent coronation dress, Mary in the dull black of her mourning. A few days later, on the third of November, the same bishop who a year earlier had annointed János Zápolya king, placed the Crown of St. Stephen on Ferdinand of Habsburg's head.

And from her chair hung with black crepe the young Dowager Queen, Mary, watched the proceedings which signified the end of her task in Hungary, the end of her youth.

CHAPTER NINE

Between Two Worlds



Cant à moy, ce m'est aincore tout
ung, soit mort ou vie.

As for me, it is all one to me, be
it death or life.

Mary to Ferdinand,
March 13th, 1529¹

WHAT would the future bring her?

This question must continually have forced itself upon Mary during the festive days in the coronation city, when the black of her own widow's weeds and her courtiers' mourning seemed the only reminder of the disaster that had struck Hungary the year before.

She reviewed with Ferdinand the various sides of this problem of her future: first, her own wishes, and next, what income would enable her to live in accordance with her rank. Ferdinand already hinted at the possibility of her remarrying. But Mary's grief was too recent for her even to consider such a solution. She declared that she would never marry again, and for the time being Ferdinand touched no further on the delicate subject. He asked her to draw up a memorandum² on her financial position, so that they might study the matter together. Their discussions resulted in Mary's keeping the estates of her dowry, while in addition Ferdinand granted her the toll-monies of Bratislava, which she had enjoyed during the last year.

As soon as King Ferdinand and Queen Anna left Székesfehérvár, Mary, with the few people remaining in her service, set out for Magyaróvár (Ungarisch-Altenburg), to hunt wild boar.³ For

now that her task had ended she sought distraction in the sport which had so often made her forget her troubles. Thus she began her aimless roaming through the Western provinces of the country of which in name she was still queen, but where she now led the life of a distinguished but impecunious nomad. She seldom remained longer than six weeks in any place, and when she had taken up residence in the empty castles, temporarily decorated with the few furnishings she could still call her own and always carried with her, she spent her days on horseback, either with her hounds or accompanied by her falconers. No winter's day was too grim for her, no terrain impassable. Her hunting party wandered from Magyaróvár to Neusiedl; from Sopron across the Austrian border to Trautmannsdorf and Orth on the Danube; from Bruck on the Leitha and Kaiserebersdorf back again to Magyaróvár. If he were to name the places where he had been with the queen since her departure from Buda, her secretary Miklós Oláh wrote to a friend in 1531, he would be writing not a letter but a history.⁴ Driven by a nervous energy which she could only express in excessive physical exercise, the queen seemed tireless and of inexhaustible vitality. Yet her strength would suddenly give out, fever sapped her health, and the doctors were powerless against the symptoms of a mysterious illness for which they could only prescribe another change of air. The moment she was able to leave her sickbed Mary mounted her horse again and travelled, hunting, to some other isolated place and moved into the next barely habitable hunting lodge, where the castellan sometimes met her with empty hands, so that she was obliged to bring her provisions—grain and wine—from distant places at great expense.⁵ Hunting was in these years not only a pastime for her, but also a hard necessity. It provided her with the game that formed the most important dish at her meals and of which, when she had been lucky, she presented a share to her brother in Vienna, so that, as she wrote, he might see she was a good hunter—"affin que vous voies que suis bonne veneresse".⁶

Her whole life of aimless wandering, of financial worries, ill health, and loneliness is revealed in her correspondence with Ferdinand during these years. Her life and her unbroken pride. She never complained of this restless, hard existence, which so often drew cries of distress from Miklós Oláh. She was frequently obliged to call Ferdinand's attention to the annoyances and worries that embittered her life. But not a word of self-pity came

from her pen—and when she describes the ruses of the treasurer at Bratislava, who had deceived her in his account of King Lajos' jewelry, her letter shows wounded pride and indignation but no weakness or depression. "Indeed, monseigneur," she exclaims, "I am ashamed to bother you so much in this cursed affair, *but the pain it causes me and the anger I feel that such a person can treat me thus*, constrains me to trouble you. Truly, monseigneur, it is not in me to describe to you how much this affair goes to my heart, my having to endure so much from such a person that if I did not take into account the fact that he is your servant, I would have hoped he would not mistreat me thus much longer, even if I had lost everything there is, *for shame hurts me more than loss*"—"car la honte me fait plus mal que le dommage".⁷

This last phrase Mary might well have chosen as her motto. All her life she was to be of the opinion that it was worse to suffer shame than loss. Loss of money and property she thought little of, and when she was wronged it was chiefly the insult that hurt her. In these first years of her widowhood, when she possessed neither kingdom nor power, her pride was her only support, the love for the members of her family her most precious possession. When in 1528 Ferdinand demanded that she should relinquish her mines and the tolls of Bratislava because he needed the proceeds for his war activities, Mary did, on a first impulse, write a note in the margin of his letter, asking with what she should support herself if this happened—"wo solches geschich, mit was ich mich unteralten sol"⁸—but at the same time she fears that a refusal to help him may cause a coolness between them.

"That God forbid," she writes in her memorandum on this question; she would rather go begging than that it should happen on account of this accursed money: "Das Gott verhuett, lieber pettel gen, dan das es des ferfluchten guett halben geschehen solt."⁹ She would rather hand over not only her widow's dower, but all her possessions, even to a dress—"auch pis an ein rock"—and also gladly risk her life for him. The notes in which this passionate expression of sisterly devotion occurs were for her own use, and there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of her feelings when she writes that she would rather go begging than fail in her duties towards her brother. But then her pride gets the upper hand again. If she must give up all her revenues, Ferdinand himself will have to support her and pay her court ladies and

her servants. For only on him will she be dependent. God forbid that she should have to run after other people! She would even rather, hard as it would be for her, do sewing with the help of God: "Lieber wolt ich, wie wol es mich hart ankem, selbs neeen [nähen] mit der hilff Gottes." Thus spoke her pride.

But with what humility, on the other hand, she can express herself towards the two men whom she considered her superiors according to the divine order of things, her brothers the Emperor and King Ferdinand. For their sake and for the sake of their House she was prepared to sacrifice everything, even her independence of thought and action.

It was not with the Emperor, later such an unwavering champion of the unity of the Church, that Mary came into conflict through her attitude in religious matters, but with Ferdinand, who in disposition and character was nevertheless so much closer to her than the slow and reserved Charles. Rumors which since 1523 had been circulating concerning the Queen of Hungary's religious conviction had not escaped Ferdinand. At first he had not been much troubled about them. He himself was accused by the Hungarians of surrounding his wife with German courtiers who were all adherents of Luther.¹⁰ But as Luther's increasing success began to alter political relations inside the German Empire in favor of the ruling princes, who hankered after independence, and to the detriment of the imperial authority which Ferdinand represented there, his attitude towards the Protestants became ever more inimical, and he did what he could to advance his own reputation as a good Catholic. He regarded it therefore as a true calamity when in the spring of 1527 a small book¹¹ of Luther's came into his hands, dedicated to the Queen of Hungary and with a foreword in which Mary's leaning towards "the Gospel" was mentioned in no uncertain terms.

The book contained the interpretation of four psalms written by the great reformer to console the young Dowager Queen in the sorrow that had come to her. It had been printed at Wittenberg towards the end of 1526 under the title: *Vier trostliche Psalmen, an die Künigyn zu Hungern ausgelegt durch Martinum Luther*, and through the association of these two names, that of the Emperor's sister with that of his religious opponent, it had immediately created a great sensation. The dedication preceding the text was not such as to lessen this sensation. For Dr. Martin wrote to the Emperor's sister:

"Most Gracious Queen! I had planned, recommended by devout persons, to dedicate to Your Majesty these four psalms, in order to exhort Your Majesty that you should continue with renewed vigor and cheer to further the holy Word of God in Hungary, for the good news came to me that Your Majesty is inclined towards the Gospel, and yet has been much hindered and prevented by the godless bishops (who are powerful in Hungary, and are said to have almost the greatest power there) so that they have caused much innocent blood to be shed, and have abominably raged against God's truth."

Shocked and indignant at this extremely painful incident, Ferdinand wrote his sister a severe reprimand, sending her a copy of the objectionable book in case she had not yet taken note of it.

Mary's answer shows what a skilled diplomat she had already become. She thanked him "as humbly as she could"¹² for the love he showed her in calling her attention to something he disapproved of in her, and she begged him to continue to do so. But her brother would be well able to understand that she could not forbid Luther to write what he pleased, to her advantage or her disadvantage. Had he not always done thus in the case of many of the Christian princes, who had not been able to forbid him, any more than could the Emperor or Ferdinand himself? She could assure her brother that she had known nothing of the book in question, and that it was written without her permission, as appeared clearly from the foreword. Ferdinand had warned her never to compromise the name of their House through her conduct, and she swore that she had never done anything that could cause this to happen.

Even Ferdinand was struck by the diplomatic skill with which his sister had avoided the real problem. Certainly, he replied, he was aware that neither Mary nor himself could forbid Luther to write as he wished; but he hoped the man would never write a book for him praising him for protecting and maintaining the doctrine he called the gospel: "*Mais j'espère que à moy ne me escripra iames livre de louuangies de ce que je garde et maigtiens sa doctrine que apele l'evangile.*"¹³ Why had she not answered the two points in his first letter: that he was told she read Luther's books, and that she surrounded herself with men and women who adhered to heretical doctrines? For these two reasons, after all, she was called a follower of Luther's, as various people already feared and reported.

This time Mary could really not evade the answer. It was long

ago, she admitted,¹⁴ that she had read books by Luther, and now that her brother had warned her she would be careful not to open them again. If her servants had misbehaved in matters of faith without her knowledge, she could surely not be held responsible. But since several people feared and even rumored abroad that she herself was Lutheran, she could no longer keep silent. Would not Ferdinand sometime investigate what she had done that was forbidden to a good Christian by the prescriptions of the Church? Of course, she had eaten meat on fast days, but she called her courtiers to witness that she had done so only on account of her health. The rumors that had reached Ferdinand had undoubtedly been whispered by the devil, "the enemy of all good, who is also the father of discord." The devil had been annoyed by the affection Ferdinand and she felt for each other and had set evil tongues wagging in order to disturb the harmony. For this reason Mary now wished to be perfectly frank, for it seemed to her that between sister and brother there should be no dissimulation—"aulcune dissimulation."

Was she sincere when she wrote this last sentence? Anyone who attempts to judge Mary's character today has no further criteria than her brother possessed: the rumors calling her a follower of the Reformation, Luther's own words, which could be interpreted in one way only, and Mary's reaction to the accusations made against her. And this last certainly has not the tone of righteous indignation one would expect from the Emperor's sister. Could she not have given her brother a short and concise answer: I abhor Luther and his teaching, since they are condemned by the Pope? Yet nowhere in the correspondence with her brother on the subject does this resolute tone occur. Too strongly bound in loyalty to her dynasty openly to choose Luther's side, Mary still had not the strength to disavow her admiration for the man to whose mighty voice Margrave George of Brandenburg had taught her to listen. She had read his works and they had touched her mind and heart. The bonds of tradition, loyalty to her brothers, the demand that she should make herself an example, all this prevented her from taking the side she had been so close to in her early, less cautious youth. But in these years of apparently aimless roaming, when she was obliged to define her attitude to many of the great questions of life, she was unable to utter the conclusive words that would have finally parted her from Luther.

When in July 1528 Mary's court preacher, Johannes Henckel,

saw his young queen again in Sopron, where she stayed for several weeks, he was struck with the change that had taken place in her since her flight from Buda. She was indeed still the tireless amazon who found distraction in the hazards of the hunt. But the suffering she had endured had brought the serious side of her nature to maturity. The illness which now condemned her again and again to an indoor life had taught her the consolation of books, bearers of the great achievements of the human spirit. Henckel could not resist telling Erasmus about his pleasant discovery and he wrote, shortly after his arrival in Sopron: ¹⁵

"You cannot imagine a more peaceful, modest and devout court. If you could see the Queen at home, you would think yourself not in a woman's apartment but in a school. She is always surrounded by books; she teaches and studies, and consoles her widowhood with edifying reading. She has not forgotten the classical authors, and what others learn with difficulty under the greatest advantages, she has made her own in sorrow and tears. For your Paraphrases [of the New Testament], which are her greatest joy and which she used to read in German translation, she now reads and rereads daily in Latin, just as you wrote them, and no detail escapes her. She certainly has the greatest admiration for you and your noble work. Why should not you, my Erasmus, place her under further obligation to you by some small present or other? You certainly have some subject in mind which is not ordinary, but appropriate to such a remarkable woman. Not to extol her, for no one can ever adequately sing the praises she deserves. But just as all wives owe you thanks for that which you wrote for one royal spouse,* so will all widows (the number of whom after the defeat at Mohács is greater in Hungary and at this court than anywhere else ever) be aware of having received, for the sake of one royal widow, an immortal benefaction from Erasmus, and be grateful to you for it."

Erasmus did not miss the opportunity of including the young Dowager Queen of Hungary in the ranks of his royal admirers. In 1530 appeared his *De Vidua Christiana* (*Concerning the Christian Widow*), which was dedicated to Mary of Hungary. It is not one of his most important works, yet the Queen, who thanked the author in her own hand for his book, found in it

* Erasmus had dedicated a pamphlet on Christian Marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Mary's aunt, the first wife of Henry VIII.

once more the meek and above all practical piety which she had learned to value so highly in Erasmus' earlier works, and which was the very opposite of Luther's passionate and militant faith.

Oláh sent Erasmus a precious goblet in his mistress's name and once more assured him how much the queen had enjoyed his essay.¹⁶ He it was who, some years later, transmitted to his famous friend, then mortally ill and forsaken by many of his admirers, the invitation in which the Queen of Hungary offered him a safe place to live and an honorable position in the country of his birth, whither fate had meanwhile called her.

The road that led from the *Consolatory Psalms* to the *Vidua Christiana*, from Luther who caused a world upheaval to the peace-loving mediator, Erasmus, was the road Mary traveled between her twenty-second and twenty-fifth year when, apparently with no aim in life, she wandered about among the castles of her hunting grounds. As her father confessor expressed it: in solitude and tears she had made herself master of things which others had not been able to acquire under happy conditions. She discovered the needs of her mind and heart, as well as the limits she wished to set herself. The uncertainties which had still tormented and impeded her in that disastrous first year after Lajos' death, fell away. The great problems of life faced her and did not find her hesitant. The line of her development took on direction and firmness, the contours of her personality grew clearer. She was no longer carried by the stream, but began herself to set the course she wished to follow.

A few months after Ferdinand was crowned King of Hungary Mary had to take the first decision that might exert a determining influence upon her future. Her brother informed her that he was obliged to leave Hungary in order to collect money and troops in the German Empire with which to defend his lands against new threats of Turkish attack. The Hungarian Diet had agreed to his departure, provided he left sufficient troops behind to protect the country, and appointed a regent. For this most important office he had once more thought of his sister, "seeing, Madame, my good sister, that I may well depend on you and also your understanding and reputation and the experience you have of affairs, and the regard and fear people will have for you."¹⁷

The whole tone of his letter shows that Ferdinand had not doubted that his sister would accept his proposal. But she re-

jected it. Her reply was not long, because of a slight headache, "ung pettitt mal de teste." She did not feel equal to this task, she wrote, "for such affairs need a person wiser and older than I am." She had further reasons to refuse, which however she did not wish to confide to a courier, and which she hoped to explain to Ferdinand when they should be together again.

But, in accordance with the habit she had developed, Mary had arranged and written down her thoughts for her own use, and a fortunate chance saved this document from destruction. It is written in that entirely phonetic Austrian German in which she apparently used to think at this time.

She began her memorandum¹⁸ with a practical little sentence: "Firstly my lack of intelligence which no one knows better than myself." Secondly, the function of regent belonged by law to the paladine. But there were still more cogent, more personal reasons for her refusal. Since Ferdinand's Hungarian subjects were all at cross-purposes among themselves, her capacities would be insufficient to find a way in this chaos. And furthermore, if she saw that the magnates were not pleased with her appointment, that they did not really want it—"nicht recht daran wollten"—she would not be able to make a success of her work. For "I know my peculiar character; I should under such circumstances harm rather than help the good cause, and bring great enmity on myself which would be to my disadvantage."

From this admission it appears how well she was aware of her own passionate nature, which tolerated opposition and even indifference so badly that she was likely to spoil by too violent reactions what she wanted to achieve. She, who had so often given proof of her unbending pride, here admitted to herself that opposition provoked her to unreasonableness, and that she could only be businesslike and balanced if she could count on sympathy and appreciation. This weakness, which she so justly recognized, was her principal reason for refusing the office her brother wished her to fill.

Ferdinand did not urge his sister to accept the post, but gave it to the paladine, as was customary. For his aunt Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands, had informed him of certain plans the Emperor was developing, the object of which was greater power for the House of Habsburg, and for which the co-operation of their sister, the Queen Dowager of Hungary, would be essential.

For some time a noticeable coolness had been developing between the Emperor and Henry VIII of England, chiefly owing to the intrigues of the powerful Cardinal Wolsey. The Regent Margaret had done her utmost to maintain the English-Habsburg friendship so indispensable to the welfare of her Burgundian provinces. But she had not been able to prevent England from entering, at the end of 1527, into an alliance with Habsburg's mortal enemy, Francis I of France. Personal conflicts as well were soon to embitter the relationship between Charles and Henry. His infatuation for Anne Boleyn had given Henry the idea of divorcing his wife, Catharine of Aragon, a sister of Charles' mother. Charles' family pride was badly hurt, and he instructed Margaret¹⁹ to order her ambassadors to incite the English against the plan of their enamored king. At the same time she should make things difficult for Henry by launching an anti-English, pro-Habsburg propaganda campaign in Scotland.

The Regent of the Netherlands put the last part of this program into practice in accordance with the tested Austrian system: she tried to bring about a marriage between the young King of Scotland, James V, and a Habsburg princess—one of the Danish princesses, who since their mother's tragic death, had been living in Malines under Margaret's care.

But King James quite justifiably replied to Margaret's proposal that he was already twenty-two and therefore not much inclined toward marriage with a child, for which he would still have to wait a long time. But, he added, he would be pleased to marry the widowed Queen of Hungary, in order to have an available wife: "*il seroit content à mariage avec la roine vesve de Hongrie, pour avoir femme preste.*"²⁰ Margaret wrote her nephew Ferdinand that he should influence the Queen Dowager to consider the marriage: "*de vouloir practiquer lad. roine vesve d'entendre aud. mariage.*"

It was a delicate question, better handled by word of mouth than in writing. Political motives should not be placed too much in the foreground, and suitable expressions of admiration for the person of the young Scottish king should be used in the "pratiques". On June 29, 1528, Joseph von Lamberg, then at Prague, was instructed by Ferdinand to go and convince the Queen of Hungary of the good fortune in store for her. He took with him a brief letter²¹ from Ferdinand to his sister, in which the king wrote that as a good brother he had been reflecting upon

Mary's widowhood and upon her age, and had realized that it would be a pity if she had to remain in that state.* "And having taken thought on all sides, I have not found a more suitable match than the King of Scotland, who is young, I understand, and good-looking and aged between 19 and 20, and though he is not one of the richest, he has his kingdom quite close to the Low Countries and also not far from Spain." Mary should realize that Ferdinand was only making this proposition to her out of brotherly love and the wish to do something to her advantage, and also to help the Emperor, for he hoped that by this marriage the King of England would be kept indoors and safely on a lead—"que par ce mariaigie gardaroit on le roy d'Angleterre en sa maison et le tiendroit sur corde."

Mary listened to the explanations of Ferdinand's envoy with great seriousness. She was well aware that she faced a decision which would determine the course of the rest of her life. Von Lamberg called her a "fresh, young, honest princess"—"ein frische junge eerliche furstin"—who would fit perfectly the king of Scotland, also a clever, sensible, honorable young ruler—"auch ein geschikhter, verstendiger, eerlicher junger furst"—but these hollow words meant nothing to her. She considered only the advantages that might accrue to their House from this step that would determine her life without enriching it.

Persuasive as Ferdinand's messenger may have been, Mary went by her own experience. Again she wrote down her considerations in German, the better to draft her answer to Ferdinand in French.²² She noted that she had decided with God's help to continue in her widowhood for the short time she still hoped to live in this world. Since her childhood she had intended never to marry again if she once lost her husband; after the sorrow that had befallen her she found this determination had become even firmer. And she ardently hoped this was no flighty spirit that animated her but one sent by God—"kain fligender, sunder von Gott verliener gaist"—so that her brother would surely not attempt to turn her from her intention. Had she not already opened her heart to him at their meeting in Székesfehérvár, when she was not yet informed of these plans? She did not refuse be-

* "Et ayant pensé à tous coustés . . . je n'ay trové pour le present plus convenient party que au roy d'Escosse, lequell est roy jonne, comme j'entens, et bel-homme de le aigie de entre 19 à 20 ans, et quambien que n'est des plus riches, s'y a ty son roiaulme bien ases près des Pais d'embas et aussy point loing d'Espaigne."

cause she had any objection to the king of Scotland, but simply because she saw the way ahead along which she wished to go until the grave.

These reasons were surely sufficient as a motive for her refusal. But Mary could not refrain from opposing her own sober political insight to that of her brother and her experienced Aunt Margaret. If she needed still another excuse, she added in her notes, she would state it as her conviction that the Emperor would derive little advantage from this marriage, for Ferdinand knew better than she that the Scots had always been pro-French and would not change for her sake. A man or a country—"ein man oder lanschaff"—usually did not bother about family relations or friendship—"schwagerschaff oder frundschaft" nor about the feelings or the advice of women—"das gemit [Gemüt] oder ratt der weiber."

Mary made her notes into a short epistle to Ferdinand, a cry from her heart, expressing the hope that it might please God that after such a good lord and husband she should never have another, since it had pleased our Lord to take this one from her in whom, as was right, she had entirely placed her love: "O, monseigneur, jà dieu ne plaise que apres sy bon seigneur et mary jamais en aie aultre puisqu'il a plut à nostre seigneur à me prendre sty [celui] en quy, comme la raison estoit, avoie entierement mis mon amour. J'espere en luy qu'il me dora sa grace que aultre que luy jamais n'aray."

How did Regent Margaret look upon her young niece's intention never to marry again? Did she, who after the death of Philibert of Savoy had never laid aside her mourning, recall the poem she had written down in the album²⁸ in which she used to note verses and songs?

Tant que je vive, mon cueur ne changera	Long as I live, my heart will never change
Pour nul vivant, tant soit il bon ou saige,	For no man living, though he be wise and good,
Fort et puissant, riche de hault lignaige:	Strong, powerful and rich, and of high lineage:
Mon chois est fait, aultre ne se fera.	My choice is made, different it will not be.

Mary, who hoped to remain parted from her husband only a short time, who bore her ill health with patience because she could truthfully say: it is all one to me, be it death or life—Mary chose another metaphor to express the same intention.

"Tant que je vive," sang Margaret, despite everything still enjoying life. But Mary of Hungary wrote in her so much more prosaic notes that she would be faithful to her husband till the grave—"pis in mein grub."

Thus she had turned down in close succession two proposals from her brother, either of which, had she accepted it, would have definitely altered her life. Neither the government of chaotic Hungary nor marriage to the king of Scotland could persuade her to give up her free, roving life, which nevertheless so often made her long for death. Pursued by creditors,²⁴ deceived and cheated by the administrators of her appanage, neglected by the Hungarian treasury which could no more spare money for her maintenance than for the recruiting of troops, she was moreover continually obliged to protect the small remainder of her income against Ferdinand's demands. She had already told her brother several times that she would give him her last possessions, even to her clothes, if he would only try to bind to himself the Hungarians who were still inclined to abandon Habsburg. "You know how constant we Hungarians are towards our ruler," ran her ironic warning.²⁵ The country was full of "pratiques" and "pettites finances", as she called Zápolya's briberies. Ferdinand's most trusted followers were beginning to grumble because the king was always living elsewhere. Once again she was being reproached for having won them over to Ferdinand's side. She begged her brother to come back to Hungary in order to re-establish his authority and call to order his plundering troops, who received no pay, to reconquer the border fortresses of Petervárad and Ujlak, the undefended condition of which now enabled the Turks to enter the Hungarian plain unhindered. This was particularly necessary in order that Ferdinand might gain the love of his people. They now looked upon him as a foreigner who left Hungary to a miserable fate and let his own troops ill-treat the inhabitants even worse than the Turks had done. Were not many people already saying they would rather live under the Turks than under the Germans? ²⁶

This wish was soon to be fulfilled. Zápolya had seized the last means of restoring his power in Hungary: an alliance with the Sultan, who was willing to recognize him as King of Hungary and promised him every support against Ferdinand. Zápolya wrote to the German Reichstag that he, the chosen King of Hungary, had been driven out by Ferdinand, and that Ferdinand

was therefore answerable if he, Zápolya, had now done something to the disadvantage of all Christendom.

The results of Zápolya's alliance became evident soon enough. In the autumn of 1528 he was in a position to attack, and countless magnates once more joined the triumphant national king. In vain Ferdinand sought help from the Reichstag at Speyer against the danger which threatened his country from Zápolya and the Sultan. The Reichstag was too preoccupied with the all-absorbing religious question to discuss measures to be taken against the Turks.

Thus a divided and powerless Hungary was once more exposed to Turkish invasion. On May 10, 1529, Suleiman took off from Constantinople for the second time, and with a still larger army, to begin his attack on the West. All Ferdinand could do against this display of force was to issue a manifesto asking help from the whole of Christendom. . . . Zápolya paid homage to the Sultan on the same field near Mohács where King Lajos' army had been annihilated three years before. On September 3, Buda once more fell into the hands of the Turks, and three weeks later Suleiman set up his tents before the walls of Ferdinand's capital of Vienna, which was defended by scarcely 16,000 men. The fate of Christendom appeared to be sealed. But the city was saved by a miracle—by heroic courage and contempt of death. For three weeks the Turkish cannon battered the walls of Vienna into rubble. But the Janissaries were unable to penetrate the valiantly defended breaches. Without having accomplished anything the Sultan was obliged to return to Buda, where Zápolya congratulated him on his triumphant journey.

Since the beginning of Zápolya's aggression Mary had sought safety at Znaim in Moravia, where she awaited the course of events in great suspense. She soon learned that Zápolya had occupied her mining territories and that her bailiff Arthándy had become his treasurer. Now Ferdinand would have to provide her with food and drink, she wrote to her brother, for now she was totally devoid of income and could only seek shelter at his court. She was poorer than ever when towards the end of September 1529 she arrived at Linz,²⁷ where Anna was staying with her children.

From Linz the two queens traveled to Passau, ever further westward, ever further from the menacing Turks. Was Passau sufficiently safe? Would it not be better to go to Innsbruck, in

the midst of the Alps, which had already protected them in their childhood? But Innsbruck, Mary had been warned, was a very expensive city . . .

This question too was solved by the heroism of the Viennese garrison. Scarcely had news of the Turkish retreat penetrated to Passau when Anna and Mary set out in the direction of Vienna.²⁸ On October 29 they arrived once more in Linz, where orders from Ferdinand awaited them both to represent him at the diet which was shortly to take place there. Thus Mary saw herself drawn once more into her brother's state affairs. He himself was at that moment at Budweis in Bohemia, and as he liked to discuss the problems of that country with his sister, many letters passed between them in these days.²⁹ Though Mary often spoke of her foolish advice, her foolish opinion ("sott conseil," "sott avis"), and though she would precede her counsel by some ironic little phrase like "so that I may act like those women who interfere in many things which are not demanded of them"—"*affin que face comme fames, quy ce mellent de biau cop de choses qu'il ne leur est commandé,*"³⁰—still the conviction grew in her that she would be able to cover a wider field of activity and be of greater use to her brother than she was now. At the end of one of her clear, well-considered letters of advice she wrote that, God willing, she wished to be of service to him in greater things, for she would devote herself to it with all her power, as would be her duty—"Pleut à dieu, monseigneur, que en plus grande chose vous puisse faire service, car de tout mon pooir, comme me sens tenue, m'y vodroie employer."

Now that she could at last exert some influence again after having had to look on idly for so long, Mary felt her spirits returning, and in the letters from these months which have come down to us a new tone, a different rhythm are perceptible. Between political arguments and constantly repeated requests for financial help she finds time for brief comments full of refreshing humor, of mockery at her own poverty, her own weaknesses, of biting irony where the enemies of the House of Habsburg are concerned. She is no longer a woman struck down by fate and expecting nothing more from life, but has found some of the joy of living again, and for the first time there echoes in her writing the mocking laughter which her friends appreciated and her enemies came to fear as a dangerous weapon.

While Mary negotiated with the Austrian Diet and drafted detailed messages to Ferdinand, now in Prague, important news reached her. After the incomparable diplomatic talent of Regent Margaret had brought about that peace between Habsburg and France for which all Europe had been hankering—the *Paix des Dames*—the Emperor Charles was at last able to undertake the trip from Spain to Italy in order to be crowned by Pope Clement VII. He intended to go afterwards to Germany for the next meeting of the Reichstag, to restore the unity of the Church, organize the fight against the infidels and see to it that his brother Ferdinand should be elected as his successor.

So at last Mary was to see again her elder brother, from whom she had been parted sixteen years ago, when she left Malines. In the midst of her discussions with the Estates at Linz she began preparations for going part way to meet him and accompanying him on his journey through the Empire.⁸¹

She had set all her hopes upon this meeting. Her financial circumstances had become so precarious that she saw no way out, unless her brothers were willing to shoulder her debts. Faithful to what she had once written Ferdinand, that she would gladly begin being a good housekeeper, if she knew at which end to start—"Je voroie volentiers comenser à ester bonne menagere, sy savoie par quel bout doie commencer"⁸²—she made expensive arrangements for her coming journey that were not exactly calculated to lighten her overburdened budget. But could she appear before her imperial brother without a fitting escort? Ferdinand helped out by sending her silks from Bohemia, and with difficulty she managed to extricate the other materials necessary for the dresses of her ladies from the merchants at Linz, who, however, were only willing to deliver their velvet and costly Flemish satins to the Queen of Hungary provided Archduke Ferdinand himself stood surety for her in writing.⁸³

The day came—it was April 22, 1530—when Mary met Ferdinand and Anna at Hohenfurt near Linz, to travel with them, hunting as they went, to Innsbruck, where they were to join Charles.

The glory of the great political and military successes his aunt the Regent and the Genoese admiral Andrea Doria had achieved for him surrounded the young emperor on his journey to the Empire, where insoluble complications awaited him. Just at this

moment, when his most difficult task lay before him, he lost his grand chancellor, Mercurino Gattinara, who had hitherto determined his entire policy. The post of first advisor to the Emperor thus fell vacant. But Charles did not wish to fill it again. At his side he now saw two energetic young figures: his brother Ferdinand, his sister Mary. They bowed before him in respectful homage. But in their eyes he was an equal, and it did the hesitant, slowly reacting Emperor good to sense their warming vitality, the sparkle of their humor, the glow of their affection. In these spring days at Innsbruck Charles, Ferdinand, and Mary sealed the bonds which were to join them for many years in loyalty to each other and to their common cause.

Yet a bitter disappointment awaited Mary in Innsbruck. So important were the religious and political problems which the Emperor had to discuss with his brother before going to the Reichstag at Augsburg, that his sister's money troubles scarcely came up for consideration. And the two rulers moved on to Germany while the two queens were obliged to wait in Innsbruck for further instructions. Mary had received no promises whatever by which she might at least temporarily satisfy her creditors. She wrote to Ferdinand, her bulwark, that her pride suffered martyrdom because she had to borrow constantly, was frequently reminded of her debts in an offensive manner, and had to endure the shame of her inferiors knowing how poor she was.³⁴

But at last a message came and she hastened to Augsburg. And while the Reichstag met, while the Emperor tried in vain to rescue the unity of the Church, while the Augsburg Confession was being drawn up and the mediation of Erasmus called in to avert a fatal break—while thus the fate of the German Empire and of the Church hung in the balance, the Queen of Hungary waited for the promises which should release her from a debt of a few tens of thousands of ducats.

Not until the discussions drew to their shrill and dissonant close could the Emperor, tired and disappointed at the failure of his work for peace, find time to let his thoughts dwell upon his sister's future.³⁵ Ferdinand had already declared himself prepared to take over Mary's debts, and the Emperor also promised her some financial support. But in addition he once again proposed to her that she should marry. This time the candidate was the same Count Palatine Frederick of Bavaria to whose romantic attachment for Mary's sister Aliénor he had put an end sixteen

years before by forbidding the marriage and banishing him from the Netherlands.⁸⁶

Once again Mary remained loyal to the vow she had made in childhood. She begged the Emperor to leave her her freedom and Charles assured her that he was only concerned for her welfare and did not wish to compel her in any way. But when a few months later his Aunt Margaret, the Regent of the Netherlands, died at Malines, he was to remember the determination with which his sister had declared that she would never marry again.

On November 24, 1529, Mary left Augsburg with her suite and traveled on horseback to Regensburg, whence she wished to continue to Linz by boat.⁸⁷ Once again she approached the Danube and the Austrian territories over which she had so often roamed. Once again she rode through the mountains around Linz, where the sound of her hunting horn roused stag and boar to headlong flight. In her letters to Ferdinand she reported their numbers together with whatever news had reached her from Hungary, where Zápolya was in power. At night, in the poorly lighted, chilly rooms of some hunting castle, she would lose herself in reading or sit bowed over the accounts of her indefatigable creditors. The money her brothers had promised still had not arrived. Once again she lived the same rootless existence she had lived before, full of worries and privations, with no task, no great purpose to which she could dedicate herself heart and soul.

Then, in the last week of December a communication from Ferdinand⁸⁸ from Bacharach on the Rhine reached her in Krems on the Danube. It mentions the game she had noticed on her trip over the Kürnberg, speaks of conditions in Hungary, which are likely to undergo a change soon. It seems a letter of small interest.

But a simple sentence follows, cool and businesslike: "I advise you that it has pleased God to take to himself madame, our aunt, the first day of this month, God rest her soul. And I think this might perchance cause your affairs to take a different course . . ."

Perhaps . . . a different course . . .

Krems on the Danube—Bacharach on the Rhine—the Netherlands. Malines, where she had lived as a happy child, watched over by her "aunt and good mother" Margaret, whom she now knew

to be dead. Who had not only been her foster mother but had also governed the Netherlands through all those years in the name of Monseigneur Charles. Who had been able to have Charles elected Emperor, to rescue Mary's crown, to conclude the peace with France, the *Paix des Dames* . . .

Did Ferdinand mean that the Emperor would call her to fill this office, to occupy that exalted post from which her aunt for twenty-five years had watched Europe, had helped to rule Europe? Should she herself, just turned twenty-five, be entrusted with the government of those rich Burgundian provinces that formed the heart of Monseigneur Charles' empire? The Netherlands, over which the eternal sea-wind blew that in countless harbors swelled the sails of ships for profitable voyages, drawing the hearts of men towards the waters that brought riches and adventure—or death.

Ferdinand's letter, which contained only an indication and yet left no doubt, had to be answered. Cautiously Mary drafted her reply. As Ferdinand had done, she wrote first about Hungary,⁸⁹ about the chances of his troops against Zápolya, about her widow's dowry which should be freed at a possible armistice. Only then did she express her grief at the death of their aunt, and touch upon the possibility Ferdinand had mentioned.

She did not know, she wrote, whether she should be grateful to Ferdinand for his promise to press this matter with the Emperor. For herself much could be said in favor of it, but also a great deal against it. But at that moment she did not wish to think of herself, only to remember the offer she had made to her brothers in Augsburg in gratitude for their willingness to release her from the pressing burden of her debts, from the anguish, almost of hell—"l'angoisse, peulx bien dire à demy d'enfer"—which had finally deprived her of all joy of living. This offer to serve and obey them in all things until death, she now wanted to repeat, not with her lips alone, but with her whole being: "*L'offre que ay fait à l'empereur que à vous . . . que vous voroie servir et obeir en tout jusques à la mort.*"

To redeem this debt of honor she had taken upon herself at Augsburg, Mary of Hungary was indeed to serve and obey until her death.

Authority without Power



CHAPTER ONE

Margaret's Legacy



Le corde au col The rope around my neck

Mary to Ferdinand

THE letter in which Ferdinand of Habsburg had let his sister know that through the death of their aunt, the Regent Margaret, her own life might soon take a different direction, was followed a few weeks later by one from the Emperor himself,¹ written from Cologne on January 3, 1531, in his own hand, in which he requested her to take over the office of Regent of the Netherlands.

Did this proposal mean to Mary the fulfilment of a wish she had been nursing in silence? Or was she already afraid of that "rope around my neck" which she mentioned to her brother Ferdinand a few months later?

It would seem that during these intervening weeks in which her chances of appointment had been becoming more definite, Mary did not fail to call the Emperor's attention to the fact that she was a suitable candidate for some high office, and to her readiness to serve him obediently in every way. In any case, even before Charles had addressed his request to her, a special messenger, the Seigneur de Bredan, arrived at his court to discuss two matters with him in Mary's name; matters which were urgent only if one assumes that Mary had a definite goal in view at that time and wished to pave the way to it by making the Emperor several unasked-for promises. At their last meeting in

Augsburg, she informed Charles, she had told him of her wish never to marry again. She feared she had not thanked him sufficiently for the reassurances he had given her, yet nevertheless she felt not quite at ease in this respect.

Her second point concerned religion. In Augsburg Mary had confessed to the Emperor that she feared criticism of her attitude in the religious controversy which had split the Christian world as a result of Martin Luther's activities. Bredan was to assure his Majesty once more that the Queen of Hungary was loyal to the faith of her fathers and was prepared to prove this to him by dismissing, should he wish it, all those among her courtiers who were said to be favorably disposed towards the heretical doctrine of Luther.

Whatever motives had moved Mary to send this apparently superfluous mission, Charles's reaction, given in the same letter in which he asked her to take over her aunt's office, left nothing to be desired in clarity. It seemed to him, he wrote, that he could not possibly find a more capable person than his sister Mary to succeed the late Regent of the Netherlands. He was even convinced that she was better fitted for this important office than the late Regent herself. He therefore most urgently requested her to accept the post, and to come to the Netherlands as soon as possible, so that he might remain with her for a while and instruct her in the task that awaited her. Could he have foreseen at their last meeting in Augsburg, the Emperor wrote, that the Regent Margaret's end was so imminent, he would certainly have discussed this matter with Mary and would not have caused her the trouble of returning to Austria only to be obliged to leave again immediately.

As far as Bredan's mission was concerned, the Emperor wished to set her mind entirely at ease. Her fear that she might be forced to marry again was unfounded. The very fact that she wished to remain a widow had been one of the strongest inducements to his asking her to accept this post.

In the matter of religion also the Emperor assured his sister in the most flattering manner of his complete confidence. Much as their aunt Margaret's death saddened him, yet he was happy that it had given him an opportunity to prove to Mary that in this respect he had the greatest regard for her. She could be sure that if he had even the slightest doubt about her religious convictions he would not entrust her with such an important

task. In that case it would not even be possible for him to feel brotherly love for her as he did now.

She herself had proposed through Bredan that she should dismiss those of her courtiers who were seriously suspected of Lutheranism. He would leave this matter entirely to her own judgment. Yet now that there seemed a prospect of her coming to the Netherlands, he wished to impress upon her that what might be condoned in Germany in the field of religion or be considered of minor significance could under no circumstances be tolerated in the Netherlands and must be looked upon as of the utmost importance.

Charles did not enter into discussion of religious principles. To him the religious controversy was primarily of political significance, as in his eyes Martin Luther had attacked principally the authority of both Pope and Emperor. He needed his sister Mary as his lieutenant in the provinces through whose wealth he could to some extent hold together his incoherent empire, and she might have her own religious views, provided her behavior in public and that of her courtiers did nothing to bring the dangerous new ideas to the already rebellious Low Countries.

He warned Mary that she would be taking a heavy burden of guilt upon her shoulders if, through persons she had brought with her from Germany, the Netherlands should become infected with heretical ideas. Since, moreover, the people in those provinces were opposed to foreigners in their ruler's entourage, Charles suggested that, if she accepted the office, she should leave her most prominent courtiers behind in Austria, and in the first place those who were suspected of Lutheran inclinations.

And in order that Mary should know what names had come to the Emperor's ears, he mentioned them all, making it clear to her, without the slightest reproach, that he knew her to be surrounded by, or to have intentionally surrounded herself with, followers of Luther only.

So she would have to leave them all behind: her Grand Master, her chamberlain, her court preacher, her almoner, her Mistress of the Robes, and all the others about her. Her brother Ferdinand would see to it, the Emperor wrote, that she had a suitable escort on her journey to the Netherlands, and once there they could choose her household from Netherlands circles. She would be allowed to compensate her present courtiers with posts that were in her gift in Austria or Hungary. But she should refrain from

making any promises with regard to her household in the Netherlands. For that purpose, she and he together could make the best selection.

With these instructions the Emperor closed his letter, "escript de Coulogne le 3. janvier de la mayn de vostre bon frere Charles."

Thus Mary was now definitely faced with the choice between two very different courses. On the one hand there was her present nomadic existence of a queen without a country, without a crown, without money. Free to roam wherever she liked, to hunt, to make music, to read if and whatever she chose. But tormented always by financial worries, lonely, aimless, without responsibilities. And on the other hand, the possibility which in recent years may sometimes have been in her thoughts: the regency of the Netherlands. A sphere of action as wide as her brother's empire on which the sun never set. Responsibilities such as only a great statesman could carry. Power derived directly from the Emperor's divine authority and radiant with his glory. Duties that would grant her not a moment's rest. Uninterrupted duties that would put an end to her limitless freedom.

A born ruler like Mary of Hungary, a woman who in her brief career already had often shown that it made her happy to bear responsibility, that impotence humiliated her—such a woman must not have found the choice as difficult as historians have thought. Now that she had received the Emperor's proposal, however, she could permit herself to hesitate over her decision, could begin forging the only defensive weapon which in the years to come she could use against her all-powerful brother: the legend of the dislike her function roused in her, of her preference for a retired monastic life, of her feeble health; in brief, of her wish to be relieved of her office.

In later years there must have been some truth in this longing Mary so often expressed. Her office, which made her a buffer between so many conflicting interests, must at times indeed have seemed unbearably heavy. But Mary knew as well as her brother Charles, who recognized and needed her talents, that she was made to command and to act, not to roam idly about or to consume her energies inside the walls of a convent. Nor to be poor, to have to count every penny. Mary of Hungary chose the course which in spite of everything would give her the greatest satisfaction. She chose the office. But not without making it clear to the Emperor that she was making a sacrifice.

In a memorandum of January 29, 1531, which she handed to the Seigneur de Boussu, who had delivered Charles' proposal to her, Mary declared herself ready to take on the regency over the Netherlands, although she did not conceal from herself the fact that she might not be up to the task, in consequence, as she said, of her rashness, her youth and inexperience, and of what she considered her poor health. As soon as she had settled a number of matters with Ferdinand, she would travel to the Netherlands, and she asked permission to keep only a few persons of her suite in her service, and, just for the expedition to the north, her Grand Master and Mistress of the Robes, since it would be very unpleasant for her to make the long journey in the company of strangers.

She knew, Mary remarked in her memorandum, that the situation in the Netherlands was highly involved, and it would undoubtedly be exceptionally difficult for her to take the leadership of affairs. She feared she would have no one about her with whom she could discuss things, so that the whole burden would devolve upon herself alone. But her only aim in life was to serve and obey the Emperor. If she followed her own preference she would certainly not take up such difficult and important affairs, but would rather live a retired life to serve God, who should be the center of her life.

And in conclusion Mary admitted that she could not undertake the journey without funds, and begged the Emperor to send her money, as the situation in Hungary did not permit her to draw on her own income.

Mary's decision flung her small court into the greatest bewilderment. Her faithful Hungarian secretary, Miklós Oláh, who, after the disaster at Mohács, had accompanied her on all her roamings, was one of the few persons invited to follow her to the Netherlands.

On February 10, 1531, the small company left Krems on the Danube on horseback² and after three fatiguing days arrived at Linz, where Mary spent a fortnight with Ferdinand, settling her Hungarian affairs as far as possible and preparing her journey to Brussels.

And thus, during the first weeks of March, Mary of Habsburg, Queen Dowager of Hungary, returned to the land of her birth, which she had left almost seventeen years ago as a child of eight. Now the landscape and language of the regions through which

she traveled were no longer strange to her. Now she recognized the bouquet of the local wines which the notables of towns and villages offered her, the Emperor's sister, upon her way, and she understood the speeches addressed to her even if they were not delivered in a broken Latin but in a German that more and more lost its soft sound as she moved westward. Now she did not have to be carried in a litter, but could turn her journey into a hunting-expedition, just another of the many trips that had filled her life in recent years. Accompanied by her dogs, surrounded by the flapping of her falcon's wings, the small, lithe equestrienne rode back to her fatherland, where a far from light task awaited her: to take over Regent Margaret's legacy, the highest government function.

Although Mary knew from rumors something of the great confusion that reigned in the Netherlands, she could scarcely have guessed during her journey how difficult the situation had become. Since their "natural" ruler, Duke Charles, as King of Spain and Emperor of Germany had seen the area of his power expand into a world empire, the Netherlands had fallen prey to the personal jealousy between their master and his most formidable rival, Francis I of France. Francis had only too gladly and only too skillfully made use of the resistances aroused in those of Charles' countries which were loosely connected and in part only recently acquired by the centralizing, autocratic Habsburg regime, which showed no respect for the chaos of annoying, unsystematic privileges to which the stubborn Netherlanders appealed in season and out, and which felt no sympathy for their complaints about poverty and economic ruin in reply to its ceaseless demands for money to finance wars.

For these provinces had known no peace in the last ten years despite Regent Margaret's efforts to establish an independent policy of neutrality for the countries under her rule. Incited or encouraged by France, the Gelderland and the Friesland again and again upset the peace of the northern provinces, whose navigation to the Baltic, principal source of the country's prosperity, was furthermore constantly threatened by the consequences of the Emperor's dynastic policy in northern Europe. And to the south of the great rivers, in that eternal battle area between France and Habsburg, in Flanders and Brabant, in Artois and Hainault and Limburg, the burgher saw his cities

plundered and laid waste, the farmer his acres trodden underfoot, his farms threatened by marauders, his cattle slaughtered or led away, no matter whether the French or the imperial forces had the upper hand at the moment. And if the rulers did conclude an armistice, the unfortunate population of the border provinces between France and the Netherlands suffered if possible even more. For the demobilized mercenaries of the two armies, no longer held in check by any sort of discipline, could only support themselves by robbery and plunder, and when a farmer did not produce his savings quickly enough he was hung up by the feet over a fire by the much feared "chauffeurs," the "stokers," and was thus forced to reveal the hiding-place of his possessions.

The consequences of practically uninterrupted warfare—plague epidemics and crop failures, the ruin of commerce and industry, continually rising prices and pinching shortages—reduced large groups of the population of the Low Countries to despair. And if the government, in the person of the Regent, again and again called together the Estates of the separate provinces, or the Estates General on which they were all represented, to ask large sums of money, not only for the defense of the country but also for the conduct of the many military operations which the Emperor considered necessary elsewhere in Europe or even in Africa—then sometimes the patience of the Netherlands gave out. Then rioting growled in the narrow streets of the Flemish cities, the people crowded together to revenge supposed injustices and showed once more that they were not made to be ruled and exploited by autocratic methods but wished to govern themselves in accordance with their beloved local privileges, their only security against any centralized totalitarian authority.

During the last years of Margaret's regency the already highly revolutionary mood in the Netherlands was further embittered through measures taken by the orders of Charles V against the adherents of the new doctrine of the Gospel, the teaching of Martin Luther and his followers. Critical spirits, capable of doubting the value of certain dogmas and at the same time recognizing that the clergy was guilty of reprehensible practices, had always been numerous in these provinces. The printing-press, that mighty weapon of criticism, kept the well-educated, independent Netherlands in touch with the newest views. Heretical or simply extremely critical ideas, which earlier had been smothered if those who proclaimed them could be rendered harmless, now survived

the stake, the gallows, and the wheel in the form of tracts and pamphlets, lampoons and satirical songs.

Luther's words fell in the Netherlands on fertile soil. For the reformation of foreign origin was nourished there by the national character, distinguished by an unbridled urge for freedom and preferring its own judgment to obedience, especially when obedience was enforced by violence.

By its bloody measures against all dissenters in religious matters the government focused attention on the new doctrine rather than exterminating it. It was very soon made clear to the inhabitants of the Low Countries that in his hereditary lands their ruler would fight with fire and sword ideas he was prepared to condone in Germany. Already in 1521 it had been forbidden to print, distribute, buy, or read Luther's books, and this decree was followed in 1522 by imprisonment of all those who openly adhered to Luther's teaching. A year later the first victims, two Augustinian monks, were publicly burned at the stake, and the fire lighted on that occasion was not to be extinguished for many years. In all cities scaffolds were erected, people were tortured and beheaded, flogged and buried alive for the sake of religion. The smoke of burning pyres, the shadow of poverty and hunger hung darkly over the Netherlands when the cortège of the new Regent approached their boundaries in March, 1531.

Charles V showed the deep gratitude he felt towards his sister as well as the respect due to her future high function, by going to meet her at Louvain. He himself had been in the Netherlands since the middle of January in order to find out about conditions there and try to bring some order into them before his sister should take over.

In Brussels Charles had found an empty treasury, high debts, and total lack of credit. The German bankers, the Fuggers and the Welsers, whose offices at Antwerp the former Regent had regularly called upon for loans, had made known that they wished to do no more business with the Emperor, unless he gave assurance in letters signed by his own hand that their property in the Netherlands would not be impounded even though it came under the rules concerning confiscation of property belonging to people who did not obey the imperial decisions in matters of religion. Since it seemed impossible to raise a penny

elsewhere, Charles had signed the required papers, and had, for the sake of the indispensable funds, guaranteed his German money-lenders against the very measures he was continually taking against his Netherlands subjects.

All the same he had had to ask the Estates General once more for money, and on this occasion the representatives of Holland had given a poignant description of the misery in their province. Holland, they said, had been ruined by the recent wars. It was too poor to mend its dikes and therefore was continually exposed to floods. There was much unemployment, trade was paralyzed by oppressive taxes and high export licenses. Flourishing cities like Delft and Gouda were practically depopulated. Holland was living in a state of emergency. It could contribute at the utmost 80,000 of the 600,000 guilders the Emperor demanded.

But Charles V was poorer than his poorest provinces, and he clung obstinately to his demand, which in the end was met in exchange for the abolition of import duties on grain from the Baltic countries and of the odious export licenses. Thus did the Emperor-King haggle with his subjects.

The success of his latest negotiations must have given Charles a good starting point for the many long talks he was to have with his sister in the coming months, to acquaint her with the countless problems of her new office. After traveling about for a few weeks—from Louvain to Malines, in order to inspect the residence of the late Regent, and thence to Antwerp and Ghent, in order to give Mary an impression of her new surroundings and to let the inhabitants of the most important cities in the south of the country see who was to govern them in future—the Emperor went with her to Brussels in the first week of April and set himself to the task of introducing to her those persons who were to be her councilors and servants in the daily conduct of the country's affairs.

In the first place there was the question of where Mary would like to live. There was, in the peaceful and yet busy town of Malines, the attractive small palace in which her aunt Margaret had gathered all her treasures about her. With its intimate, velvet-hung apartments, its precious library, its manuscripts and miniatures, its tapestries and bibelots, its incomparably beautiful paintings by Memlinck, Van Eyck, and Hieronymus Bosch, Margaret's

home was the ideal place for a woman who took satisfaction in beauty of color and tone and form. Here her successor should be able to find quiet and opportunity for reflection.

But Mary of Hungary wished to arrange her life only partly as her aunt had done. The unique library she inherited was to give her much joy, and she did not fail to recognize that the art treasures of the Malines palace created a truly royal atmosphere. But the small rooms of the Court of Savoy where Margaret's lapdogs had played were too small for the hounds with which Mary was accustomed to surround herself. The decorative birds twittering in their gilded cages made her nervous. To parakeets and siskins she preferred the swift noble falcons which flung themselves so purposefully upon their prey, which could sit so proudly, plumed golden caps covering their fierce heads, upon the falconer's gloved fist. Malines was too small, too elegant, too feminine for Mary, who preferred excitement and danger to luxury and refinement. Furthermore, Malines was not, like Brussels, situated in the midst of the famous forest and hunting ground of Soigne, but was surrounded by pastures where game was rare and where Mary's all-dominating passion would find little satisfaction.

Moreover, as long as her brother Charles remained in the Netherlands, Brussels would be the indicated residence for them both. So Mary's choice fell on the Brussels palace, so much more pompous and imperial, so much more suitable a setting for an autocratic ruler than the dwelling in which Madame de Savoie had felt at home.

Charles V granted his sister an annuity in accordance with the imperial style of her residence. Since her widow's dowry in devastated Hungary had given her worries and annoyances instead of funds, her income was fixed at not less than 36,000 pounds a year, to be drawn from the most reliable revenues of the Low Countries. It was decided at once that of this sum 3,000 pounds should be used for paying a bodyguard of one officer and twenty-four archers, while 1,000 pounds were reserved for the salaries of her choristers.

At the court of Brussels the prospective Regent found but few of her aunt Margaret's old councilors, many of whom had died shortly before their mistress. But the Emperor's first councilor, Nicolas Perrenot, Seigneur de Granvelle, schooled in Margaret's

service, was still in Charles' Council as specialist on Netherlands affairs. No one could better advise Mary about the problems that awaited her. He would be able to describe to her the characters and habits of the high Netherlands nobles, the Knights of the Golden Fleece, her "cousins," as Mary was to call them, who would constitute her nearest entourage. He would be able to warn her that these gentlemen would probably cause her considerable trouble in the future, and not only through jealousy among themselves. During the last years of her life the Regent Margaret had often offended these nobles most painfully, alienating them from the Habsburg interests which they had made their own as long as they felt that their own authority, as well as that of their ruler, was being threatened by the powerful cities, Ghent, Bruges, and Antwerp. But as the Habsburg's autocratic tendencies assumed more serious proportions, the nobility began to see what a dangerous side they had chosen, and that royal absolutism left no room for the noblemen who had always behaved in their own territories as all-powerful potentates. During her rule Mary was to notice ever more clearly that the Netherlands nobles were not inclined to let themselves be made into submissive courtiers and showed more sympathy for the revolutionary burghers, the more their "natural" ruler conducted himself as Emperor of Germany and King of Spain instead of as Duke of Burgundy.

Granvelle could tell the new Regent various particulars about the burghers too, and it is not unlikely that Mary recalled the not very reassuring experience her grandfather Maximilian had gained in the Netherlands as regent for his children. But she had not yet had the opportunity to test in practice what she had been told about her new subjects, when on July 6, 1531, in the palace at Brussels, she attended, at the Emperor's side, her first meeting of the Estates General, convoked to receive the information that the Emperor would shortly return to Spain via Germany and had found the Queen Dowager of Hungary prepared to accept the regency over the Netherlands.

For the first time Mary found herself face to face with the representatives of the provinces she was to administer. For the first time the members of the Estates General saw the small, slight woman, who was to take the place of the admired and feared Regent Margaret. She resembled her brother the Emperor in a striking way, as she sat beside him in her sombre widow's

weeds on which no jewel flashed. Her young but pale and tired face was surrounded by a white linen cap of German fashion, so little flattering, in its rather clumsy simplicity, compared to the light muslin creations Margaret had always worn. Mary's face, with its somewhat prominent eyes, its heavy eyelids, its disdainful mouth with the full lips, possessed a cool reserve that was not without hardness. The gentlemen of the Estates General must have felt very clearly the difference between their late Regent, who even in her last embittered years had still kept a certain geniality and charm, and this haughty young woman, who in no way whatever betrayed what was going on in her mind at that moment.

Mary's first months in the Netherlands must have given her small reason for satisfaction. As long as the Emperor himself was still present, her position remained not only subordinate, but obscure as well. She could assume her office only when he left the country, and serious internal complications prevented his doing so at the end of July as he had planned.³ Hunger riots in Liège, in which the measures against the Lutherans also played a part, had to be suppressed with bloodshed, and thus Mary received her first practical instruction in the handling of rebellious subjects.

But Charles had still another reason for delay. There had been considerable criticism of his sister's appointment. His father confessor, Cardinal Loaysa, had warned him from Rome that the Queen of Hungary was far too young and would run the risk of losing her good name if she remained unmarried. The French court, which gloated over every mistake on Charles's part, was convinced that the young widow in the Netherlands would try vigorously to have a good time and would think more about her pleasures than about affairs of state.⁴

Moreover, it had become clear to Charles that even under the Regent Margaret, with her unequalled political experience, much had gone wrong in the Netherlands through the fact that she had practically ceased to take her Council's opinion into account. His concern, therefore, was to prop up Mary's inexperience on the one hand, and, on the other, to limit any possible autocratic tendencies on her part by setting up new government bodies with closely circumscribed tasks. The study of these most important measures demanded much time and reflection. Thus it was only made known on October 1, 1531, that the Emperor had

been pleased to add to his House—that is to say, his court—a State Council, a Privy Council, and a Finance Council.

Through these bodies the young Regent was surrounded by many experts in various fields. Contrary to what she had feared before her arrival in the Netherlands, the burden of state affairs was by no means to fall upon her shoulders alone. It was in fact the State Council, over which she was to preside, which in the sovereign's absence would be charged with the government of the country. The Knights of the Golden Fleece, the members of the Privy and Finance Councils, of the Grand Council of Malines, the highest court of justice, the governors of the various provinces, and the bishops had access in an advisory capacity to its meetings. To prevent Mary's neglecting to consult this highest body, Charles did not hesitate to restrict his sister's authority perceptibly by granting the State Council the right to meet without being convoked by the Regent.

After this announcement had been made, the document dealing with the Regent's authority was read at a solemn session of the Estates General on October 7, 1531. Mary was given power to uphold the law; receive petitions; call together the Knights of the Golden Fleece, the various governmental colleges, the Estates General and Provincial. She was charged with the supervision of legislation and finances, the supreme command of the army, and the highest authority over the governors of the provinces, the generals, and the judiciary. She was empowered to issue edicts and ordinances, distribute offices and grant reprieves. In short, she received the right to perform everything that could serve to maintain the sovereign's authority and the welfare of the country.

Unfortunately, the heavy mantle of sovereignty which the Emperor had laid upon her shoulders, as though to conceal the fact that she was but an instrument of his will, seemed at first an oppressive garment for the new Regent. One week after the meeting of the Estates General a second meeting took place of all the spiritual and temporal authorities in the country. On her throne beside the Emperor Mary waited, outwardly calm but trembling with nervous tension, for the breathtaking moment at which she would have to address for the first time this gathering of dignitaries in their bishop's robes, their fur-bordered tabbards, their colorful satin doublets upon which gleamed the insignia of the Golden Fleece. Her torment lasted for an hour and a half. First the Emperor spoke for more than an hour, taking his leave,

and urging his audience to remain true to the Catholic faith and not to touch heretical books. He enjoined obedience to Queen Mary upon all present. Although she was inexperienced, said the Emperor—and he hesitated a painfully long time before the exact word would come to him—she would be supported by the experienced judgment of the members of her Council.

When the chancellor replied to this speech, assuring the Emperor that his subjects were deeply grieved at his departure and hoped for his speedy return, various persons showed signs of emotion and the Count of Nassau could not restrain his tears. This, alas, was the moment for Mary to speak. With her usually pale face flushed, she spoke for half an hour, but so softly that even those who sat close to her could not understand her.⁵ No, the new Regent's first appearance contributed nothing to end the rumor that the Emperor had confided his hereditary lands to a far too young and inexperienced woman, and the dignitaries present must have reconciled themselves to this boring half hour with the thought that their new mistress might be easier to manage than Madame de Savoie. How very much mistaken they were in this respect!

For a while the Netherlanders remained in uncertainty about the qualities of their new ruler. The Emperor himself held the reins of government, his departure from the Netherlands having been still further delayed. This time the postponement was caused by his brother-in-law, Christian II, the exiled King of Denmark, who for years had stayed in the Netherlands as an undesirable émigré, lying in wait for a chance to reconquer by force the country from which he had been expelled.

The Hollanders, who rightly feared that Christian's presence might endanger their own good understanding with the new Danish king, which was indispensable to their Baltic trade, had repeatedly protested against his stay. But the Regent Margaret, at the Emperor's wish, had put up with Christian although his rough and reckless personality filled her with a strong feeling of aversion. Charles V stood by his troublesome brother-in-law, not because he felt any obligation towards a man who had lost his throne and who furthermore openly adhered to Luther's teachings, but for the sake of Christian's children, two daughters and one son, who represented valuable dynastic possibilities since they could always put forward claims to the Danish crown.

After the death of their mother the "children from Denmark"

had found a safe home in Malines, at the court of the Regent Margaret, who took them under her wing with the same generous kindness with which on her arrival in the Netherlands she had adopted the children of her brother, Philip the Handsome. But she did not wish to see their father in Malines and it seems likely that Christian also preferred his residence in the little town of Lierre to the small court of Malines where Madame de Savoie could keep an eye on him.

When in 1531 his powerful brother-in-law Charles at last returned to the Netherlands himself after so many years, Christian had hastened to Brussels to see whether the Emperor would be willing to help him reconquer his kingdom. But in Brussels Charles was within too close range of the arguments of the Hollanders, who expected from Christian's adventure only disaster to their Baltic shipping, to agree openly at this time to a plan which might have attracted him had it been put before him elsewhere. When he refused assistance, Christian decided to help himself. Having raised troops in East Friesland, he penetrated through Overijssel into Holland and demanded ships, cannon and ammunition from the Estates for his expedition against Holland's best business relation. There were plenty of tramps and adventurers in the Netherlands quite willing to go to sea with a *condottiere* like Christian, and before the Estates could take any defensive measures, Christian pressed his demands by force, plundering the good city of Alkmaar with his vagabonds and pirates while the rest of his bands ravaged and burned the country surrounding Utrecht.

Against these robber-chief methods, carried out with a few thousand mercenaries, the Emperor was as powerless as the Estates of Holland. Only by yielding could he remove the direct danger to the northern provinces, and in October the triumphant Christian embarked at Medemblik in a dozen heavily built Dutch warships. With gloomy faces the old salts on the quay watched this fine fleet sail out to sea: this expedition could bring the Medemblik skippers no good, and the Low Countries would soon taste the bitter consequences. The Emperor realized that Christian's departure did not mean that the Netherlands were now altogether rid of him. If things went against him, he would certainly put in to one of the Dutch ports and snatch what was not given him voluntarily. Charles decided to raise foot-soldiers in order to protect his country against this dangerous member of the family.

It was clear that Christian's undertaking exposed not only the province of Holland to great dangers. Whenever in recent years tensions had developed between Charles of Habsburg's empire and the countries of northern Europe, France had at once been ready to attack its hated rival in the southern Netherlands. So now, in this first summer of Mary's presence in the Netherlands, scarcely was there question of trouble in the north, when from the south came rumors of French threats. Before he left the Netherlands, Charles V wished to inform himself of the condition of the defenses along the borders of the southern provinces. At the end of November he went to Tournai, whither Mary, anxious to see what she would have to rely on after her brother's departure, followed him.

The farmers whose fields lay along Mary's route received orders to open all gates so that the Queen could ride freely across the land. The bad state of the roads was given as the reason for this measure. It is more likely, however, that Mary could not bear to let this chance of a long hunt on horseback escape her.

What impression the southern fortifications made upon her we do not know. But that she derived great satisfaction from her trip is not to be doubted. For on her return from her first military inspection Mary, followed by her hounds, spent four days getting from Tournai to Brussels, a distance which her secretary, who did not share her love of hunting and was grateful for this unexpected holiday, covered in a day and a half.

CHAPTER TWO

Modest Pupil



Votre tres humble et tres obeis-
sante soeur et servante, Marie.

Your very humble and very obe-
dient sister and servant, Mary.

Mary to Charles V,
November 1532

NOW that the Emperor's departure from the Netherlands seemed imminent, there were many problems for Mary to consider on that winter ride from Tournai to Brussels. There was the expansion and strengthening of the House of Habsburg in the future, to be achieved far in advance by means of the most unlikely marriages, which to the parties concerned would appear normal and indeed inevitable. There was the maintenance and protection of Habsburg's present power against foreign enemies and internal disturbances in various parts of the empire, by all the means of force and deceit, corruption and threat which stocked the arsenal of European politics. Mary had as yet but the vaguest notion of the pattern she would have to work on. Yet she must advise the Emperor in the selection of the threads to be woven into the still invisible design.

In September an envoy from the Duke of Milan had arrived at the imperial court ¹ to discuss the possibility of a marriage between his master, Francesco Sforza, who was thirty-six and unfortunately lame, and ten-year-old Dorothea, the elder of the two Danish princesses under Mary's care. Would such a bond between Milan, an imperial investiture, and Denmark be a move favorable to Habsburg on the chessboard of European politics?

Or would the chance that the ill-matched couple might in time have offspring be too small to justify the sacrifice of a valuable pawn like Dorothea? Might another marriage bring the House more profit, and would it not be possible to strengthen in some other manner the good understanding with Sforza, of importance in opposing France?

While discussing this possible marriage, the Emperor and Mary once more jointly proposed to James V of Scotland that he should now become engaged to Dorothea, whom he had rejected three years earlier as too young.² The result turned out as might have been expected: James felt that the daughter of the exiled King of Denmark was beneath his dignity, and the mood at the Scottish court, which still resented the Dowager Queen of Hungary's refusal of their King's hand,³ now turned openly against Habsburg.

Did Mary offer her ten-year-old niece to James V in order to be sure that she herself would be left in peace? She must have known that the Emperor, despite his solemn promises, had not entirely given up the idea of a second marriage for her. She could no longer doubt this when in the summer of 1532 a rumor spread through Europe that the King of Scotland was now suing in earnest for the hand of a French princess, and would thus align himself with Habsburg's enemies. The Emperor wrote to Mary how disturbed he was at this news. But he had learned that the Scottish ambassador to his court would be traveling through Brussels, and he begged her to try at least to postpone James's French marriage by letting the ambassador understand that if need be she herself would be prepared "to give her own person". There need be no question of her actually marrying James; he knew how averse she still felt to such a step. But she would surely realize how extremely important it was not to let the French marriage take place, and as one who understood hunting she also ought to know "that big deer serve to keep the small ones in the right track . . ."

Mary's reaction to this proposal is not known. The dreaded union between James V and the French royal house took place, although five years were to elapse before the Scottish king brought his spouse, the then seventeen-year-old Madeleine of France, to Edinburgh.

Meanwhile the moment approached when Mary's task was really to begin.

The Emperor's departure for Germany was preceded by brilliant festivities, offered to him by the Portuguese ambassador to celebrate the happy fact that the Queen of Portugal, Catharine, youngest sister of the Emperor and the Regent Mary, had given birth to a son. On the square in front of the ambassador's house a tournament took place by torchlight. From a balcony draped in green and white velvet, Charles and Mary in the company of the children from Denmark gazed down upon the flashing of armor and spears, upon the stately rhythm of sword and torch dances. At the banquet that followed, the Emperor, seated between his sister and his niece Dorothea, was gayer and more talkative than usual. As always, he ate immoderately of the countless courses, the interminable series of which was now and then interrupted by music. After the dinner masked Italian and Spanish nobles performed an Italian comedy, which ended with the appearance of King Cupid in a triumphal chariot surrounded by goddesses. Portuguese wines were served in golden goblets and preserved fruits passed about in precious Chinese porcelain dishes. And the host did not leave it at that. Enchanting crystal vases and flasks of perfume were presented to the Queen of Hungary and the little princesses, all the ladies of the court received elegant gifts, and until late in the night dance music sounded in the rooms of the Portuguese embassy.

The citizens of Brussels who that evening crowded at the windows and on the roofs of surrounding houses to get at least a glimpse of the glittering spectacle, and who in the following days again and again heard the festive sound of trumpets and watched colorful processions moving through the streets, could be proudly aware that their city, still an imperial capital, was the center of a world empire where the fate of millions was decided. But a few weeks later, after the Emperor had left, no more decisions of importance to world politics were taken in Brussels. The city lost its international aspect. The pomp and luxury of foreign embassies disappeared together with the brilliance of the imperial court, together with the 300,000 golden florins Charles V took along in his luggage to meet the costs of his journey. What remained was a tree-lined provincial city, capital of a still inexperienced young regent, whose judgment, even in Netherlands affairs, carried little weight as yet, and who cautiously and modestly represented her powerful brother among subjects who were still strangers to her.

She would presently get to know them better, these subjects of hers. For the Netherlands very soon began to feel the consequences of Charles' weakness toward his brother-in-law of Denmark. The ships of Christian's fleet were unmistakably of Dutch build, and the new King of Denmark, Frederik of Holstein, urged on by the people of Lübeck and Hamburg, who always grudged the Hollanders the very light of day, promptly took the one measure which Holland and Zeeland feared more than floods and epidemics: he closed the Sound, gateway to the Baltic, to all Netherlands merchantmen, exposing the Low Countries to an economic crisis with all its consequences of unemployment, hunger and revolt. On their own responsibility the Estates of Holland sent representatives to Copenhagen to explain what had happened against their will and they begged the Regent to mediate officially in the conflict that threatened the northern provinces with ruin.

Mary, who had been instructed by the Emperor to do everything possible to settle the differences, added one of the imperial councilors to the mission of the Estates of Holland, to protest against the closing of the Sound and offer peaceful negotiation. This proposal was accepted, but at the same time postponed indefinitely by the opposing party. The opportunity to deal a deadly blow to Holland's shipping seemed to Lübeck and Hamburg too good to be missed. Holland and Zeeland ships were seized, Texel was blockaded by a Hansa fleet. A few months after the Emperor's departure the northern Netherlands found themselves in a state of war which promptly brought most disastrous consequences. For these provinces possessed little land and many inhabitants, as their Stadholder, the Count of Hoogstraeten, expressed it in a report to the Regent, and they had therefore to earn daily bread on the water, by "sailing east and west for hire".

Van Hoogstraeten's report also made it clear that these same inhabitants blamed the Emperor's policy for the disaster that had befallen them. It said in so many words that the northern provinces would transfer their loyalty to another master—"se donneroient à un autre seigneur"—if they were not speedily rescued from their critical situation.

At that moment in 1532 this phrase must have been as incomprehensible to Mary of Hungary as if it had been written in Turkish instead of French. It could not have penetrated to her consciousness, still completely feudal in feeling and thought, that these few matter-of-fact words foreshadowed an action

which eventually would prove to lie within the capacity of the people of the Netherlands, when under the leadership of William of Orange they actually threw off the Habsburg yoke.

But Mary did realize the extraordinarily perilous position of the Netherlands at a moment when help from their "natural" ruler was least to be expected. For the Emperor was faced with problems compared to which starvation, revolt, and war in the Netherlands were of secondary importance. In Germany, where he was at the moment, the religious conflict had taken on an even more clearly political aspect through the formation by the Protestants of the Schmalkaldic League, which in fact renounced allegiance to the Emperor and the House of Habsburg. The League had already made contact with Habsburg's arch-enemy, France, with Denmark, which was harming the Emperor in his hereditary lands, even with Henry VIII of England, now moving heaven and earth to discard the devoted, pious, virtuous Catharine of Aragon, Charles' aunt, who was six years older than himself, for the gay and charming Anne Boleyn, twenty-two years younger.

In the past Henry had always been glad to play the mediator between the two great European powers, Habsburg and France. A mediator always prepared to support the party that was weakest at the moment, in order that neither should achieve definite control of the European continent. But now his amorous temperament had got the upper hand of his English political instinct. Now he wanted but one thing: to marry the enchanting Anne Boleyn, even though that meant a rupture with the Emperor, who could not tolerate the repudiation of his mother's sister for a pretty little nobody. A rupture with the Pope as well, who refused his consent to the divorce. The German Protestants had a sharp eye for any potential opposition to Habsburg; Henry's infatuation could only do them good.

The German problems were threatening to assume the dimensions of a catastrophe, when it became known that the Turks were again preparing a great attack on Europe. In order to win the support of the rebellious German princes and cities against Suleiman's approaching armies, Charles was obliged to be conciliatory in his dealings with them. He even had to humble himself so far as to charge his sister Mary with the task of persuading Henry VIII of the necessity for all Christian rulers to cooperate against the enemies of the faith.

Henry's ambassador, discussing these affairs with Mary at Ghent, was well satisfied with the friendly manner in which the Regent had laid the problem before him. Had His Majesty heard the Queen of Hungary's words and seen the engaging expression of her face, he wrote to his master, he would undoubtedly be inclined the more generously to do . . . whatever he thought best.⁴ Ten days later a treaty of reciprocal support between Charles and Henry came into being—despite Spanish Catharine's grief, despite Anne Boleyn's charms.

But Henry's help proved superfluous. Once again the Hungarian border cities repulsed the Turkish attack on Austria. The German army, in which there were also Netherlands troops, could devote itself to the conquest of a number of Turkish banners, which the imperial commander-in-chief laid at the feet of the triumphant Emperor in a jubilant Vienna. It seemed that Charles would now be able to leave the German empire as its true ruler. A civil war was avoided for the moment. Europe hailed him as the savior of Christianity.

But this triumph could not alter the fact that he had not succeeded in weakening in any way the position of the Protestant rebels who had fought for him against the Turks.

It was not to be wondered at that during these critical months the Emperor scarcely found an opportunity to reply to Mary's urgent letters from the Netherlands. And when at last on August 13, on the eve of his encounter with the Turkish armies, he took the time to write, it was to inform her of a personal sorrow that had befallen him in the death of his young nephew, Prince Johan, the little pretender to the throne of Denmark, who had been obliged to leave the Netherlands and his two small sisters in the company of his imperial uncle.

In the correspondence between members of the House of Habsburg personal expressions are rare, so that their human characteristics are well nigh undiscoverable amid the intrigues, plans, and political speculations filling their letters. But the death of little Johan drew from Charles's pen a few simple sentences revealing sincere sorrow. "I am deeply saddened," he wrote to Mary, "for he was the handsomest little boy of his age one can imagine. I am not less affected by his death than by that of my own son, for I knew him better and he was already bigger, and I looked upon him as my own child. But perhaps the little fellow

is better off where he is now than here where I wish he were, and perhaps he is laughing heartily at me because I miss him so. As you will see, I am writing to my little nieces to console them, and I assume that you will do that too. The only thing we can do for the girls is to find them two husbands." ⁵

As Charles was writing this letter, news reached him that Prince Johan's father had been the victim of a plot and had fallen into the hands of his opponents. The castle in which he had intended to carry on negotiations proved to be the prison where he was to remain shut up for the rest of his life. The role of Christian II on the European stage was ended.

While waiting for the Emperor's dangerously delayed instructions concerning the differences with Denmark, the Regent had allowed herself to be convinced by Holland's desperate appeals for help. She ordered all Hansa ships in Dutch harbors to be seized, and afterwards succeeded in prevailing upon her brother to bear half the expense of equipping a fleet of war, built with all speed in the shipyards of Holland and lying ready to put out to sea as a strong argument, when at last the long-delayed negotiations at Copenhagen got under way in June 1532.

But before the threat of these forty warships could turn the scales at the Danish conference, the distressed state of the Low Countries brought the Regent face to face with certain social and political conditions in her provinces of which she as yet had no conception and which were to put her still-inexperienced understanding to a severe test.

No shipping on the Baltic, no bread on the table. That was one of the laws of Netherlands economy. And one of the laws of the Netherlands national character ran: no bread, no obedience. In Brussels in that summer, when the Emperor had taken the field against the infidels, a hungry mob plundered the house of a merchant accused of hoarding grain. The revolt spread like wildfire. Houses in the neighborhood were looted by the bawling crowd, among them the house of Mary's court baker, whose stocks were robbed. When at long last the city authorities gave orders to disperse the mob it was too late: the people already had the upper hand.

Now the city government could only think of bolting the city gates to prevent those outside from joining the rioters, and calling the guilds to arms to restore order inside the walls. When the Regent returned that evening from a fatiguing day's hunting,

she found the city gates shut and guarded by nervous burghers. Her fury at the laxity of the municipal authorities, through which she, the Queen of Hungary, had to put up with the insult of finding herself locked out, knew no bounds. The strongest measures should at once be taken against the disturbers of the peace!

The fall of night made it impossible to act immediately. Only next morning were the armed guilds able to put down the disturbance and arrest a number of ring leaders. Quiet returned to the city. The gentlemen of the corporation breathed again.

But it was by no means Mary's way to leave things at that. Her own bakery had been robbed and that was *lèse-majesté*, to be most severely punished. Without caring or perhaps even realizing that she was violating time-honored privileges which entitled the burgher to be tried by his own magistrates, she demanded that the prisoners be turned over to her.

The magistrates were now faced with an impossible choice. The Regent's anger, already aroused by their negligence, might grow to serious proportions if they refused to carry out her command. But by handing over the arrested looters and treading their own privileges under foot they would incur the perhaps still more dangerous anger of the people. The gentlemen could think only of requesting the Regent for a few hours' respite in which to take counsel among themselves.

But the rumor of the Queen's demand had flown through Brussels. The guilds themselves, who had arrested the plunderers, opposed their extradition. This was the signal for the citizens of Brussels to storm the town hall and free the prisoners. The burgomasters, sheriff and aldermen who had wanted to think things over, now barely managed to escape from the tumult.

Mary was faced with an enigma. Wishing to maintain justice and punish criminals, she had come into collision with a different justice, which lay nearer the heart of the Netherlands burghers than order and quiet. The citizens of Brussels thought the Regent's offense more grave than that of the plunderers. Not only did the guilds continue to refuse extradition of the arrested people; they even insisted that the Regent should hand over one of her servants, who had made common cause with the plunderers and had been taken into custody by her bodyguard. The burghers had the insolence to add a whole series of demands by which the city administration and the judiciary would regain their former independence from the central government.

The Regent did not hide her indignation from the guilds' messengers who dared bring these matters to her notice. But her council was able to appease her and to convince her that the greatest caution was essential in handling this explosive situation. The people might quiet down if the Regent asked the guilds' representatives to put their demands in writing.

But when on the following day Mary began negotiations about the document which they had presented, and showed no inclination to yield, revolt broke out anew in the streets of Brussels. The situation threatened to become so dangerous that Mary saw no way out, save by meeting all the demands. The armed guilds instantly proceeded to suppress the revolt that had been so helpful to their cause. Forty plunderers were again seized and within a few days were put to death, in the presence, upon special invitation from the guilds, of the Regent's representatives.

But the drama was not ended yet. Mary had informed the Emperor of the concessions that had been wrung from her. "I suspect that it is an old brewing-vat", she wrote, "that was already bubbling when Your Majesty was here." ⁶

The Emperor's reply was brief but forceful. "I can impart my decision to you in two words," he wrote, "namely that those low rebels must be smartly punished, as an example to others. What they forced you to agree to must at once be recalled, and not only that, but also further vicious privileges, should they have any . . ."

Things had come to a climax. Mary's council advised her to leave Brussels and she went to the town of Binche, in order to await from a safe distance the result of the action of the troops which now came to occupy Brussels under the command of the Marquis of Aerschot. Their presence proved quite sufficient to change the minds of the rebellious burghers. The city authorities sent a deputation to Binche to ask the Regent's forgiveness and offer her a present which might put her into a favorable mood: a white falcon, wearing a gold cap. But Mary was obliged to adhere to the imperial command: no pardon. She would grant forgiveness only if they submitted unconditionally to the Emperor's will. And to show that this was her last word in this affair, and that there could be no question of negotiation, she promptly departed for Mons, leaving the Brussels deputation behind in consternation.

For weeks the Brussels city government hesitated, perhaps

hoping for help from outside, for a defeat of the Emperor, for a miracle, before giving in. And for further weeks their representatives struggled with the Regent's councilors over the severe punishment Brussels would have to undergo: the loss of a number of "vicious" privileges. But the fight between a single city and the ruler of an empire was too unequal. Brussels had to give in.

On the last day of 1532 three aldermen, the city pensionary, and a number of representative burghers of Brussels appeared at Mons before the Regent, who had surrounded herself with a grandiose company of Knights of the Golden Fleece, councilors, gentlemen of her court and the obedient local government of Mons. And while the Brussels burghers went down on their knees, the pensionary read a petition in which the community asked forgiveness. This was graciously granted, but under the most humiliating conditions.

On January 8, 1533, four months after she had left it, Mary of Hungary returned to the defeated capital. The authorities received her at the Hal Gate, and thence she rode to the Church of St. Gudule between two rows of silent burghers, all bare-headed and barefoot, dressed in black as a sign of penitence and carrying white tapers in their hands. In the oppressive silence which hung heavy in the crowded streets, the clatter of hoofs, the tread of the marching infantry, the rattle of the wagons in Mary's train took on an ominous significance. A ruler was returning to her capital, which from now on would only fear her. Her entry was not accompanied by the cheers with which the Netherlands could be so generous, but only by the harsh sound of her own power. The bond that had once existed between the people of Brabant and their Duke was broken. Hatred had been sown in their hearts.

So far Mary had found little happiness in the Netherlands. In the preceding April, a few months after the Emperor had left, she had had a fall from her horse while hunting, and this accident she took so much to heart that, as she wrote Charles, she would really have preferred a severe pain to the shame she felt. She had not been able to forget this mishap and began to show increasingly neurotic symptoms. Under the pressure of her difficult new office she became subject to melancholy, to a sense of loneliness and hopelessness, which in the end she was unable to hide in her usually so businesslike letters to the Emperor.⁷ She admitted that

she still suffered from the effects of her husband's death, and this sorrow seemed to have weakened her judgment to such an extent that she scarcely felt able to fulfil her function.

The serious problems she had to face in both domestic and foreign policy did not help her resistance, either mental or physical. The Emperor's campaign against the Turks, the situation in Hungary where personally, too, she had so much at stake, kept her in a continuous state of nervous tension, and this was further aggravated when in October 1532 an ominous comet appeared in the sky, undoubtedly predicting, it was said, the death of some very highly placed personage.⁸ The winter Mary had spent at Binche and at Mons as a voluntary exile from Brussels was cold and unpleasant, and though she sought distraction in visits to Valenciennes and Douai, where she was received most cordially, was offered presents of money, theatrical performances, and a visit to a zoological garden,⁹ she had increasing difficulty in overcoming her depression. Furthermore, a disappointing incident took place when, at the Emperor's command, she had to refuse a request she would very gladly have granted. Her eldest sister, Aliénor, now Queen Éléonore of France, wife of Francis I, wrote her how much she longed to see her again, now that they were fairly near neighbors for the first time in almost eighteen years. Would it not be possible, Éléonore asked, to meet in Northern France, in all privacy, with a small following and none of the pomp and show of protocol?

Éléonore, alas, was not only the long-missed sister, she was also the French king's wife. It was quite possible that her letter, undoubtedly written in all sincerity, had been inspired by her dangerous husband, whose intention could only be guessed at. Mary's council deliberated at great length over the letter and finally agreed to leave the decision to the Emperor himself.

Charles saw no advantage in a meeting of his sisters.¹⁰ Mary should refuse the invitation as best she might. She could refer to the floods that had taken place, and to the fact that she was very busy, and finally to the great difference between her own way of life as a serious widow and that of the mundane French court. "For you may be sure that if the French see the difference between the way you live and dress and behave, and theirs, they will say of it exactly what they please and will without doubt change good into evil."

Her disappointment over the failure to see her sister did Mary

no good. Shortly after her return to inhospitable, grumbling Brussels she fell ill and complained of a trembling heart and fever, without, however, being willing to consult a doctor. Her secretary recognized in these symptoms the same illness from which she had suffered after her husband's death,¹¹ and he like many others feared that it might be fatal. The doctors, who were not admitted to her presence, were convinced that the Queen had herself to blame for her poor health because of the excessive manner in which she wore out her slightly built body by riding and hunting. "If the Queen has not been hunting for four days," the English ambassador wrote to his minister, Cromwell, "she thinks she is ill. I have often accompanied her on her trips, and the man who would follow her day after day needs a strong horse and a strong heart." ¹²

Her doctors' opinion was undoubtedly the reason why Mary refused to listen to their advice. Why should she take care of herself, give up her horses, dogs and birds, when nothing else made life worth living? "*Cant à moy, se m'est aincore tout ung, soit mort ou vie,*" she had written a few years before to her brother Ferdinand. She had as yet found no purpose in life that caused her to change her mind.

CHAPTER THREE

More than the Possible



Il faut faire plus que le possible. It is necessary to do more than the possible.

Charles V to Mary,
September 1536

TO Mary, lonely, ill, and sad, the enormous palace of the dukes of Brabant with its countless rooms and apartments, its endless corridors and its labyrinth of service quarters, kitchens, pantries, armor rooms, tapestry rooms, offered a princely dwelling but not a home. She was not yet aware that here, between the high walls of the pompous halls, a young creature was growing up who at first would give her anxieties, but later much joy and comfort.

Despite their youth the two princesses of Denmark, Mary's foster daughters, were already showing very different traits of character. The elder, Dorothea, now twelve, who since the death of her brother could be regarded as crown princess of Denmark, was a jolly, curly-haired child who loved a good time, knew no fears or worries, and was later to confess that she felt happy only when she had spent her last farthing. In comparison, her sister Christina, a year and a half younger, was so calm and purposeful that she seemed older than her age. She was a tall, slender girl, already taller than Dorothea, and she had soon stolen her aunt Mary's heart because, like her, she loved nothing better than riding and hunting. Barely eleven, she was brave, energetic and tireless, possessing at the same time the sweetness and charm of her mother, who had died young, and whom she resembled in the

pure oval of her face and her somewhat shy manner. She had her aunt Mary's prominent eyes with the heavy lids, and her Habsburg underlip stamped her unmistakably as a descendant of the Emperor Maximilian I.

The Danish princesses were to Charles merely material for marriage plans, as his aunt Margaret and his sisters Aliénor, Mary, and Ysabeau had been to his grandfather Maximilian, and, as we know, he had for some time been negotiating alliances for them. After Prince Johan of Denmark's death the new Danish king, who kept their father a prisoner, proposed to the Emperor a marriage between the elder princess and his second son, whom he promised he would then recognize in Denmark as heir to the throne. Charles, however, was not prepared to give up Dorothea's precious claims in favor of a competitor, even though he should become her husband, and when in December 1532, after his glorious victory over the Turks, he met the Duke of Milan at Bologna, he felt inclined to listen to Sforza's request, who, this time, wanted to marry not Dorothea, but little Christina. A few months later, when the Emperor had returned to Spain, the contract was signed for this marriage between the thirty-eight-year-old Sforza and the eleven-and-a-half-year-old Danish princess.

When Mary of Hungary received a copy of this document she was shocked to see that her brother had agreed that the little bride should undertake the journey to Milan immediately after the marriage by proxy. In principle Mary was not opposed to the marriage of a child to an unknown man old enough to be her father. She herself had been united in marriage when barely nine years old. But at least she was fifteen before she was allowed to go to Hungary to share the life of her young husband. The decision the Emperor had now taken regarding Christina Mary considered unacceptable. For the first time in her correspondence with her brother she abandoned the humble attitude of modest pupil and spoke with a conviction and a confidence in her own judgment that cannot have escaped Charles despite the careful terms in which her letter was couched.

"I reply to Your Majesty for the moment only to unburden my conscience", Mary wrote, "and to warn you of the difficulties I think I discern so that Y.M. may decide as you think best, before the whole matter is settled, in case anything can still be altered in the agreement.

"That the consent of our niece to the marriage in question can

be obtained, I do not doubt. She will always accept what Y.M. wishes to decide for her, as she has complete trust in you, as in her Lord and Father whom she will always obey as a humble daughter and servant [esclave]. And as far as I myself am concerned, Monseigneur, although I am deeply attached to the child, I submit myself entirely to your command; but on the other hand I do wish to inform Y.M. that it appears clearly from the agreement that the marriage is to be consummated within a very short time. Yet if her departure is actually hastened in this way she will not yet be of marriageable age according to the written law, as she is only eleven and a half; and according to natural law, I am of the opinion that it contravenes the law of God and all reason to have her marry so young, before she is twelve years old, which she is not yet. For all girls are not mature at the same age, and she is not so at all. I hold it not only contrary to God's command, but I am moreover convinced that you may endanger her life, should she become pregnant before she is altogether a woman. It has often happened that in such cases neither the mother nor the child has survived the birth.

"Monseigneur, I am aware that I have said more about this matter, and that I express myself more clumsily, than is desirable. I beg you to forgive me, for my conscience and the love I bear the child compel me to it."¹

Mary of Hungary had seldom shown such warm human feeling in her letters. And seldom did Charles V reveal his inhuman side so openly as when he replied:

"Since this matter belongs more to the field of the gentlemen in cap and gown than to my own, I have charged Granvelle to write to you about it and have showed him your letter. It only remains for me to say that I concluded the contract at that time, as their father lives in such circumstances that he is more dead than alive as far as his children are concerned. As regards the question of age, I fear that the Duke may have more objections than our little niece. I am convinced that you will conduct yourself in this matter as you assure me you will, and as I wish."²

Without going against her brother's instructions Mary endeavored in every possible way to gain time by delay. An envoy from the duke of Milan, who came to conclude the marriage by proxy, arrived in the Netherlands before she had received Charles's answer. Yet nothing was simpler than to let His Excellency know that the Queen of Hungary had unfortunately to

keep her bed as the result of a hunting accident; and after her recovery serious affairs called her to the southern borders of the country so that to her sincere regret she had to ask Count Stampa to wait until her return to Brussels. She consented to let him see the young princess for a moment and to kiss her hand as his future mistress.

But when a week later Charles's chamberlain, de Praet, arrived at Ghent with the negative answer to Mary's letter of protest, and with orders to accompany Princess Christina to Milan, Mary could no longer play her game of postponement, and the wedding ceremony had to be prepared. The envoy from Milan followed de Praet's advice and went on to Lille, where the Queen and her nieces were staying. There the wedding by proxy took place on September 28, with all the glitter and show customary on such occasions.

After the child-bride had returned to her apartments, Mary conversed at length with Count Stampa, without, however, being persuaded to fix a date for her niece's departure. The following day de Praet informed the envoy that the Regent could only allow the little Duchess of Milan to make the journey across the Alps in the spring, not during the winter months. The Queen would consider it a privilege, said de Praet, if His Excellency would accompany her on a hunting trip she intended to make from Brussels in the following week. But Stampa preferred to return to Milan and report to his master. He took leave of Mary, who started out at the crack of dawn in pouring rain to return to Brussels, hunting as she went. The bad weather did not in the least spoil her enjoyment. She had played her cards well. She would keep her niece under her care for another few months.

But early in 1533 Christina celebrated her twelfth birthday, reaching what was held to be a marriageable age. On March 11, seated in a black velvet litter and accompanied by a household of twelve ladies, ten gentlemen and four young pages, the small duchess left the Netherlands. Twenty mules and three luggage wagons conveyed the costly trousseau the Queen of Hungary had provided for her niece.

During the last months of Christina's stay in Brussels Mary's health had become worse than ever, her restlessness more marked. She suffered daily from stomachaches and palpitations and to the dismay of her courtiers had frequent fainting spells, from which,

however, she used to recover quickly. Her entourage whispered about the character of her illness. They had the impression that the Queen bore a "terrible secret", and they vainly begged her to speak about it, or at least to listen to the advice of her doctors.³ But Mary remained silent and could not be persuaded to alter her fatiguing way of life. Unless she really felt too ill, she usually got up at five o'clock and spent most of her day on horseback, retiring at nine o'clock to her own apartments.⁴

The huge palace seems to have had such a depressing influence on her that she felt impelled to escape it, and for a time even moved, first to the house of Van Brederode, and later, after Christina's departure, to the Nassau palace.⁵ In these more intimate surroundings she seemed for the first time in months to settle down and be in better health. She still would not listen to the doctors who flocked to Brussels from far and near in the hope of making their fortune by curing the regent. She did, however, drink the herb and barley-water potions prepared for her by a little old woman in Brussels—and these seemed to do her good.⁶

But this recovery was only temporary and Mary sank back into a condition of apathetic melancholy that robbed her of all interest in her work. She was convinced that she would die soon and thought only of making her will without delay. She requested her brother to release her from her high office, describing how palpitations of the heart troubled her as soon as she concentrated upon any of the complicated matters she had to deal with in her daily work. She felt fit only for a retired life without responsibilities.

Charles V did not dream of releasing his sister. He sent her prescriptions for cures which had relieved one of the Empress's ladies, or the Empress herself, of these same symptoms. But the rest she longed for he was not willing to grant her. He was well aware that in Mary he possessed a representative who would be difficult to replace.

Her morbid depression lasted until the spring of 1534. She scarcely occupied herself any longer with affairs of state, seldom left her apartments and only waited for death. But in April an Italian doctor arrived in Brussels, sent by the Duke of Milan, who succeeded in being received by her and in winning her confidence.⁷ And when the days began to lengthen she was tempted out of doors again. Presently she ventured into the palace park.

And then, for the first time after many months, she decided to mount a horse. Her mysterious ailment returned now and again and sometimes fever kept her in bed for days. But gradually she won back her health and at the end of May 1534 she had recovered sufficiently to enjoy a hunting trip of not less than twelve days in the surroundings of Louvain.⁸

It was high time the Regent of the Netherlands regained her health and energy. In the countries under her care strange disturbances had arisen, caused by social ferment and fanatical religious tensions, showing themselves in a general lack of respect for law and tradition and in the unbalanced excesses of Anabaptists, Melchiorites, and various strange societies which called themselves "brotherhoods" and proclaimed the arrival of the Millennium. Their prophecies seemed about to be realized when Jan Matthysz of Haarlem and Jan Beukelsz of Leyden founded the new Jerusalem in Münster in Westphalia, summoning the faithful to save themselves from the clutches of the devil and meet in Zion.

Everywhere in the Netherlands this exalted summons was obeyed. In barges, in carts or on foot, hundreds of men, women, and children from the cities and villages of Holland and Friesland set out in the direction of the new Jerusalem, without provisions or protection, with the flame of religious madness in their eyes. So-called sword-runners and Adamites ran naked and screaming through Amsterdam, lamenting "Woe! Woe to the world and to the wicked!" In Groningen a more dangerous sound was heard, preaching reformation and revolution together. "Kill them, kill them!" cried the fanatic Harmen Schoenmaker in that town. "Kill them, the monks and the papists, all governments in the whole world, especially the one that rules over us!"

The government could not tolerate this lawlessness, these mad anarchistic fallacies. Everywhere the barges and boats were held up on their way to Münster, men, women and children were arrested; prophets and seers were seized, tortured, put to death; cities and villages prepared to defend themselves against these fanatical innocents who in trying to reach their sacred city ran blindly upon pikes and halberds.

This intoxication raged inside the country. And outside the borders the usual danger threatened: the feud between Habsburg,

striving for world domination, and the royal house of France, which saw in such domination its own destruction.

Charles V's realm had too many weak spots, too many indefensible frontiers, for its enemies to leave it in peace for long. In the summer of 1534 Francis I started a political attack by putting new proposals to the Emperor, ostensibly to make up their long quarrel: proposals containing among other things the condition that Charles would not come to the assistance of the Duke of Milan, who was now his nephew, if Francis should try to conquer the dukedom, to which he still claimed dynastic rights, by force.

Charles was certainly not disinclined to consider the possibility of peace with France. This was after all the indispensable condition for the realization of his grandest visions: to exterminate Protestantism, and to break the power of the Turks with the aid of a Europe united under his imperial banner. But what would he achieve if for the sake of peace he sacrificed his nephew of Milan to the ambitions of the unreliable French king? The loss of Milan would drive a wedge into the imperial territories in Italy. The Pope, still a compulsory ally of Habsburg, would be only too eagerly inclined to side with France. The German Protestants would exploit any weakening of the Habsburg power. In short, yielding over Milan would be equivalent to a defeat in the struggle that would undoubtedly follow if Charles refused to accept the French plans. He preferred the chance of a victory on the battlefield to a peace too dearly bought. With the utmost courtesy, he rejected the French proposal.

This decision meant to Mary the beginning of many troublesome years. All the dangers which her predecessor, the Regent Margaret, had had to contend with once more darkened the future of the Netherlands. All that was anti-Habsburg inside and outside the frontiers of these provinces, all that rebelled against Charles' feudal autocracy out of religious conviction, out of love of freedom, out of pursuit of gain or lust for power, united for the attack. Denmark had already begun the dreaded economic war with Holland which might at any moment turn into armed warfare. In Lübeck, Holland's greatest trade competitor, a fleet of warships was being prepared. The Duke of Gelre did what tradition dictated in such a situation: he openly chose the French side. After his divorce from Charles' aunt and his marriage to

Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII of England had no longer any particular reason to consider Habsburg or the Pope, with whom he had definitely broken. His fleet threatened the Netherlands with invasion from the sea, while French troops gathered along the southern frontiers.

The messages and reports coming up for consideration at the council meetings in the Brussels palace presented the same threatening picture that the Regent Margaret had so often had to face. Imminent attack from all sides and no funds in the treasury for defending the country. Mary received orders to undermine the power of Habsburg's opponents by political shrewdness, and her messengers and spies dispersed to counteract the intrigues of the French in Germany and Denmark, and to enter into trade discussions with Henry VIII while trying to upset his good relations with France.

The increasing tension between France and Habsburg greatly troubled Éléonore of France, who longed to play the part of mediator for which she had been intended, formally at least, through her marriage to Francis I. In the summer of 1535, when it seemed that Europe would once again burst into flame, she repeated her request that she might meet her sister Mary either in the north of France or in the south of the Netherlands.

This time Charles consented to the plan, on condition that the sisters would refrain from all political discussion, while he emphatically assured the ambassadors of the Pope, of Venice, Portugal, and England to the French court that the meeting was simply a family visit.

It was Mary who arranged the program for the meeting, probably in order to have better control of the situation, which she feared to some extent. She traveled to Cambrai—that same Cambrai where Margaret had signed the *Paix des Dames*—with a very modest following, to mark the private nature of her visit. But Éléonore, who probably wished to honor her sister, appeared in truly royal state, surrounded by a most select company: the King's daughters and countless ladies of the court, cardinals, dukes, princes, and even the leader of the anti-Habsburg party, Admiral Chabot de Brion.

Though King Francis himself was not included in this brilliant gathering it was clear that at that moment he was eager to ingratiate himself with Mary and Charles. The Admiral had the opportunity for a confidential talk with the Queen of Hungary,

who in her stiff widow's weeds hardly looked like the younger sister of the fashionable and elegant Éléonore in her French dresses. But Mary's haughty and reserved face betrayed no particular reaction when the French commander spoke to her of his master's friendly feelings for the Emperor. If in the past one party had asked too much and the other had offered too little, in future this might well be altered. . . . But Mary did not change her attitude. She had come to see her sister, not to talk politics. And she departed from Cambrai without having made a single gesture of rapprochement.

As far as she was concerned there had been no need to make any such gesture. For at the same moment news had arrived in Europe that the Emperor had achieved the greatest triumph that could have been in store for him. In the Mediterranean area the Turkish pirate and slave-hunter, Barbarossa, whom Suleiman had appointed Bey of Tunis and Grand Admiral, had for a long time made the coast unsafe by his raids. In the summer of 1535 Charles personally undertook a spectacular crusade against him. At the head of a Spanish, Italian, German, and Netherlands army, supplemented by volunteers from all the countries of Europe, with the banner of Christ waving above his plumed helmet, the Emperor defeated the Turkish armies that had come to assist Barbarossa. The Fort of Tunis was captured, and thousands of Christian slaves were freed to return to hearths and homes, spreading through Europe the fame of their imperial rescuer.

The success of this romantic expedition greatly strengthened the self-confidence formed so late in Charles's slowly developing personality. He was now thirty-five, and felt himself master of the European situation. Now the moment seemed to him to have come to check French ambitions permanently by a moral victory as spectacular as the expedition to Tunis.

He did not have to wait long for an opportunity. He visited Rome to celebrate his victory. A meeting of welcome took place at which the Pope and all the cardinals, as well as all ambassadors to the Vatican, were present. And there, seated at the Holy Father's side, the Emperor gave an account, as it were, of his rule, and in a long speech accused the French king of enmity and perfidious disloyalty. It was his firm intention, he told the exalted company, to make an end of the feud that for twenty years had been tearing the Christian world to pieces.

He was prepared to leave to the King of France the choice

between three possibilities, accepting in advance the solution his opponent preferred. He offered to invest the Duke of Angoulême, youngest son of Francis I, with the dukedom of Milan, which had fallen vacant through the sudden death of Francesco Sforza. Should Francis reject this solution, the Emperor was prepared to submit to a divine judgment, a hand-to-hand fight between King and Emperor, with sword and dagger, with the dukedoms of Burgundy and Milan as the stakes. If Francis rejected this solution also, there would again be war between Habsburg and France. "And then," the Emperor cried, "may the one who is defeated be robbed of everything, and come out of the contest the poorest nobleman in Europe."

It was certainly the fiercest insult ever offered to a king of France, this challenge to Francis I, soft, witty, elegant, loquacious, no longer young, no longer in good health, to a deed of personal courage, to a duel "in shirtsleeves". Charles's speech in Rome, to which Francis did not deign to reply, meant a declaration of war—and it was Charles who proceeded to attack. In the summer of 1536 the imperial troops marched into Provence, which the retreating French burned and devastated in an effort to stop the Habsburg invasion by hunger and privation.

Before these French tactics were crowned with success, before Charles' armies, exhausted, sick, decimated, could retreat from the glowing heat of Provence to Italy, the Netherlands too had been involved in the war. Mary had done what she could, preparing, with money she had been obliged to borrow from the gentlemen of her council, not only defense but even attack. Now circumstances no longer permitted her to suffer from poor health or give way to gloomy thoughts. The utmost was being asked of her energy and endurance and she achieved the utmost. Charles sent her money and authorized her, moreover, "to sell and mortgage up to the very last thing." But even this desperate measure was not sufficient, and it was Mary herself who found the courage to convoke the Estates General for the purpose of calling on the provincial finances.

It took courage indeed to explain to the Netherlands representatives how much money the Emperor needed to make war on the King of France because of French claims in Italy. What business was it of theirs, this quarrel on the other side of the Alps, the Estates asked themselves. It was a matter of indifference to them who was duke in distant Milan, and they returned to

their provinces grumbling about the promise extracted from them that they would plead for new contributions.

Promises of funds came in slowly, while the danger of war became ever more threatening. The southern provinces which lay in the first danger zone—Artois, Namur, Luxembourg, Limburg—decided to pay. Holland promised 100,000 guilders, Bruges and Ypres voted funds. But Ghent—powerful, independent Ghent—refused to furnish money and proposed that, according to her old rights, she should put infantry into the field under her own banner. And when the city government, under threat of the approaching danger, at last decided to give in, they did so under protest and repeated the offer of troops, thinking in this way at least to keep control of the funds that had been asked for.

War broke out—an interminable series of skirmishes, acts of incendiarism, sieges, bombardments; deeds heroic and ferocious, attack followed by retreat, while everywhere the thatched farm roofs crackled and smoked.

The Regent checked incoming reports—news from the front, statements from the treasury. Money from the provinces came in; that should mean attack. "Take the offensive!" she ordered her generals—Nassau, whose son had already been taken prisoner by the French, and the Count of Roelx, who was besieging Péronne. "Take the offensive, do not exhaust yourselves in sieges!" A few rapid successes would at least show the provinces that their money was well spent. Winter was approaching, the season that made sieges difficult and diminished the troops' fighting spirit.

What the Regent had feared, happened. The siege of Péronne, obstinately defended by a small French garrison, had to be raised, and sarcastically she reproached Nassau for not having been able to take "this dovecote."⁹ The Netherlands generals, divided by envy, laid the blame for the campaign's failure upon each other, answering the Regent's reproaches with counterreproaches. All funds raised in the provinces with so much difficulty were exhausted, and the mood of the Netherlands, which might have been saved by a conspicuous success, turned into panic. News coming in from here and there made Mary fear a general insurrection.

She herself was close to despair. She was convinced that the campaign had been badly conducted, that her commands had been flung to the winds. She felt herself surrounded by mistrust

and opposition, "being hindered before and behind," as she pithily expressed it,¹⁰ and met only with personal rivalry and petty self-interest among the nobles upon whom she should have been able to rely. Her complete lack of power—as representative of the Emperor, who paid scarcely any attention to her problems, as Regent versus her subjects, who refused to keep the treasury filled and instead threatened revolt, as a woman versus her generals, who did not wish to take notice of her commands—filled her with a strong aversion for her office. She thought the Netherlands would be lost to the House of Habsburg unless she were relieved of her post, unless the Emperor himself took control.

But Charles V, who at the same time had had to raise the siege of Marseilles and to flee the burning heat of Provence with his sick and starving soldiers, could only tell his sister that now his presence was urgently demanded in Spain. "These countries must be helped, peace must be made, or we shall lose them," Mary cried.¹¹ A month later she repeated her request to be released from her unbearable position, as she could accomplish nothing and was blamed for every disaster.

But while she begged to be freed of a responsibility she was no longer able to bear, Mary, literally with courage born of despair, again exerted herself to the utmost. If the Emperor could offer no relief, the Netherlands would have to look after themselves. The Regent set the example by indeed doing, in accordance with her brother's instructions, more than the possible. New troops were recruited and sent to Hainault, when on the last day of April 1537 the unbelievable news reached Brussels that the French army had begun to retreat.

It was thought to be a ruse, and under Mary's personal leadership defense measures were doubled. She prepared to go to the front herself and astonished her entourage by wearing over her tabbard a black leather jerkin, provided with eyelets on which to fasten a cuirass. "If Francis will just wait for another fortnight, I will show him to what purpose God can give a woman strength," she assured her generals.¹² And on one of the last days of May she actually started for the south, accompanied by a body of horse, "to give the French a present," as she put it.¹³ The English ambassador, who was in her suite, wrote home full of admiration, saying that the French were in for a rude awakening if it depended on the Queen, the most bellicose woman he had ever met. But Mary's council did not allow her to go into the

firing line and her cuirass was not called upon to serve its purpose.¹⁴

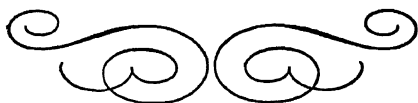
Even when it became clear that Francis I had given up his attack on the Netherlands, Mary continued her military activity in order, as she said, "to arrive at peace through force." Her troops won a sensational success by capturing St. Pol, where a horrible carnage took place. But despite some further victories she looked to the future with anxiety. Her visit to the front had enabled her to satisfy herself of the weakness of the Habsburg position through lack of money and the inevitable danger of mutiny. When her brother agreed that she should sign an armistice for the Netherlands if she saw a possibility of doing so, Mary seized this chance with both hands. Since her meeting with her sister Éléonore at Cambrai she had carried on a regular correspondence with her and was therefore well informed of the changing moods at the French court and of the possibilities they offered of negotiation. Thanks to this contact an armistice of ten months was arranged between France and the Netherlands on July 30, 1537.

However much the people of the Netherlands rejoiced over this relief, Mary's generals looked upon the "cease fire" order, imposed upon them just at the moment when they had the upper hand, as a disgrace, even treachery on the Regent's part. Several members of her council flatly refused to sign the treaty. The German mercenaries in the service of the Netherlands, to whom the war was after all a means of subsistence, were so infuriated at the armistice, which made robbery illegal, that they threatened to plunder their own headquarters, the city of St. Omer,¹⁵ and Mary, who was staying there, was obliged to depart in great haste to the north. That the Regent, who really could not be accused of a lack of fighting spirit, had acted at the Emperor's command, was an argument to which the generals were not receptive. They objected principally because they had to dismiss the best troops that had ever been in the Emperor's service, when in a few weeks, even days, they might have achieved the most brilliant victories. Once again it was clear, the generals grumbled, what the consequences were if a woman controlled the conduct of affairs.

Not until twelve months later did Charles V and Francis I sign for their entire realms a ten-year armistice, which was everywhere celebrated as a peace. Europe breathed again. But not for long.

CHAPTER FOUR

Authority without Power



Comme doncques moy seray-je si téméraire de penser estre capable non pas d'un tel gouvernement que celui-cy, mais du moindre du monde? et d'abondant estant femme, et comme telle inepte au principaux actes de gouverner?

How should I be so bold as to think myself capable not of a government such as this, but of the least in the world? And moreover being a woman, and as such inept at the principal acts of governing?

Mary to Charles V,
August 15, 1555¹

IN the years that lay behind her Mary of Hungary had had too much experience of high European politics not to be on her guard against new tensions or a revival of old differences. Yet she must have listened to the chiming of the bells, which in July 1538 rang out over the Low Countries from countless spires in celebration of the armistice, as to the voice of peace which for her personally, too, might be ringing in a period of relief and quiet.

All this time her residence had served as military headquarters and as meeting-place for the government of the Netherlands. Generals and officers, couriers, scouts and spies, with their clattering armor, their fluttering plumes, their colorful, fantastic warriors' costumes, filled the cavernous palace with an atmosphere of excitement, of danger, of breathless haste after a wild ride. The seasons which blossomed or withered in the woods around Brussels went by almost unnoticed by the Regent, who in her capacity of commander-in-chief, minister of war and

minister of foreign affairs, did not allow herself time to look up from the despatches, the express messages, the reports that poured incessantly into her study.

But in this summer of 1538 Mary could at last afford to leave her writing table and listen to the sounds which came to her with the festive chimes: the singing of her court choir, the tuning of instruments, the laughter of young pages, the bark of her hounds, and above all the tones of a young girl's voice.

Since the departure of Princess Christina for Milan, and during the months of her own illness, Mary had sometimes enjoyed the company of the gay, companionable Princess Dorothea. But Dorothea too had been carried away on the rising waves of European policy when in 1535, with the death of the new King of Denmark, Frederick of Holstein, the question of the Danish succession again became acute. Dorothea's value as crown princess of that country suddenly rose so high that the Emperor hastily concluded marriage arrangements for her. The best candidate at that moment was Frederick, the Count Palatine, who had long sought connection by marriage with the House of Habsburg. He was fifty years old when at last he received the offer to become the husband of the youthful Crown Princess of Denmark, who might possibly bring him all three Scandinavian kingdoms as her dowry. A little over a year after Christina's departure, Dorothea left the Brussels palace where her aunt Mary, in the midst of serious diplomatic complications and expensive war preparations, had managed to get together, this time in all haste, a suitably costly trousseau.

But a few months after Dorothea's marriage a messenger arrived in Brussels with news of the death of the Duke of Milan. Christina, now fourteen, had become a widow and thereby once again a political pawn of importance and a responsibility to the head of her House. Christina could not remain in Milan. An imperial order reached her to return to the Netherlands as quickly as possible. Even before the girl reached Brussels, Mary of Hungary occupied herself with negotiations, the aim of which was to create elsewhere some royal refuge for her niece.

Christina, still deeply saddened by the death of the friendly, prematurely old man she had called husband, had barely settled down in her Brussels apartments, suitably hung with black velvet, when an offer reached Mary which for a moment must have taken her breath away. The formidable and dangerous

Henry VIII of England himself informed her that it would please him to make the young widow of Milan his fourth queen. Henry had beheaded Anne Boleyn on the pretext that she had been unfaithful to him, and ten days later had married Jane Seymour, a former lady in waiting to his first wife, Catharine of Aragon. But Jane Seymour died at the birth of her first child, the long-awaited son and heir whom neither of her predecessors had borne him.

Here was a problem both political and human which challenged Mary's diplomatic gifts to the utmost. She had come to regard Henry as a reckless, infatuated and misguided man of whom one might expect anything. Before the news of Jane Seymour's death reached her she had written to her brother Ferdinand:

"It is to be hoped, if one can hope anything from such a man, that if this one bores him he will find a better way of getting rid of her. I believe that most women would not appreciate it very much if this kind of habit became general, and with reason. And although I have no inclination to expose myself to dangers of this kind, I do after all belong to the female sex, so I shall also pray God that he may protect us from such perils."

Mary of Hungary realized that the Emperor could not allow himself to rebuff the King of England by a refusal. But the arrogance with which Henry was pursuing this new marriage caused Mary to be particularly cool and curt to the English ambassador when he came to tell her—so unexpectedly that on hearing his words she sprang up from her chair—that his master had been pleased to send his court painter, Hans Holbein, to Brussels to make a portrait of the charming widow of Milan. Could Her Majesty agree that the Duchess should pose for the painter, who had just arrived?

The Emperor had neglected to instruct his sister how to act in the matter of the English proposal. But Mary knew Charles' political motives sufficiently well by now to be able to handle it in his own spirit, even without special instructions. Holbein was admitted to Christina's presence, and in three hours made the sketch which was to enable him, on his return to England immediately afterwards, to achieve one of the most attractive portraits known to be by his hand.

The effect of the picture on Henry was sensational. It had never cost him much effort to fall in love, and the somewhat shy

glance with which Christina looked at him from Holbein's painting was enough to set him aflame. His ambassadors in Brussels now did not need to write much more about the political rumors they picked up at the Regent's court, if only they told him enough about Christina's charms, her smile that gave her two dimples in her cheeks and one in her chin, "the which becometh her right excellently well," her courage on horseback, even her wisdom. Henry now requested the Regent to come to Calais with her niece so that he might at least meet his prospective wife before their two lives were united for good.

But in this respect Christina's guardian was adamant. She knew that the political situation was in process of changing and that the Emperor and the King of France were seeking a rapprochement which would make an English marriage for Christina much less desirable. She therefore set herself to keep Henry interested without making any positive promise, in the safe conviction that Habsburg could always withdraw from the affair by referring to the papal dispensation that would be necessary, as Christina was, after all, a kinswoman of Henry's first wife, Catharine.

Thus the summer of 1538 passed in skirmishes between the Queen of Hungary and Henry's ambassadors, amidst endless court intrigues between those who hoped for an English marriage for the young Duchess of Milan and those who saw their own advantage in some other alliance.

To Mary the return of her niece meant something more than political negotiations. Christina, still a child when she had left for Italy in the spring of 1534, had come back at the age of almost sixteen, an elegant young woman of the world. Her arrival caused a change in the Brussels palace, where the members of her suite introduced a lively Italian staccato into the French conversation of the Regent's Netherlands entourage. And when Mary could at last wind up the permanent council of war which her life had been during the war with France, she discovered that the sad solitude in which she used to spend her days among her many courtiers had now become a thing of the past.

Christina's presence bridged the gulf which before had separated the Queen of Hungary from the world about her. Christina, after all, was "of the blood." She was no courtier, no servant, no subject, but one of those rare creatures—an equal, a possible friend. It is true that the young duchess behaved towards

her aunt, who was sixteen years her senior, with a certain shy reverence, submitting herself humbly to whatever the Regent decided for her. Nevertheless she was closer to Mary than anyone else in her surroundings.

Perhaps for the first time since the death of her husband Mary found in this girl a person whom she could approach, who seemed by her youthful widowhood to be repeating the course of Mary's own life. Everything she had given up for herself: youth, beauty, charm, a crown, she now desired for Christina, and not only because it would add luster to the House of Habsburg. Mary found in her niece's fresh beauty a satisfaction in which motherly pride mingled with helpless pity for so much youth and innocent charm. Christina had come back to Brussels dressed in somber widow's weeds in the Italian style, from which only another marriage could free her. Very soon the Regent commissioned the court painter, Master Barend van Orley, to paint a portrait of her, and at her aunt's express wish Christina posed in a brilliant gala dress that undoubtedly had been made for her after her return to Brussels, since she had outgrown the elegant clothes in which she had shone as a twelve- and thirteen-year-old girl at the court of Milan. Except in the hours when she sat to Orley, Christina continued to wear her mourning, until Mary finally begged her to exchange the black velvet and widow's cap for gold brocade and jewelry, at least on intimate evening occasions.

Christina occupied her own apartments in the palace and maintained her own suite and independent household, the expenses of which were met from her widow's allowance. Only her meals, which she took mostly in the company of her aunt, was she given free, the English ambassador wrote to Henry VIII, not without sarcasm.²

Now that there was peace, Christina's life as well as Mary's consisted of an almost uninterrupted series of hunting expeditions. At daybreak a gay company would gather in the park of the "Court of Brabant", surrounded by excited, baying hounds, and followed by a procession of heavily laden servants with the necessities for several copious repasts, which, weather permitting, were served on long, elegantly laid tables in the open air, so that the party could remain outdoors all day, only returning to the city after sunset, preceded by countless torchbearers.

For Mary these were happy hours. If she was forced by particularly bad weather to remain indoors, she suffered, even in the

spacious rooms of her palace, from a claustrophobia that made her nervous and impatient or depressed and melancholy. She disliked the interminable meetings of her Council, which usually took place after the arrival of an imperial courier and sometimes lasted from seven in the morning till late at night. But on horseback in the hunting field she forgot the thoughts that indoors always seemed to oppress her. Then she really enjoyed the company of Christina, who was as good a horsewoman as herself and whose tirelessness and fearlessness filled her with respect. Christina on her part lost on such occasions some of that timid awe which the Queen's severe authority inspired in her and which indoors made her a little silent and awkward. So the two royal ladies roamed the woods around Brussels and the fame of their equestrian skill spread over Europe. Anyone who wanted to get into the Regent's good books or hoped to influence Habsburg policy, sent to Brussels a present of a fiery horse, or a couple of particularly swift hounds, or a beautiful falcon, and Mary accepted the gifts without letting herself be distracted for a moment from her chief aim in life.

That aim, the glory of the House of Habsburg, was during all of 1538 closely linked with the unusual friendship with France. Queen Éléonore was urgently pressing for a family gathering in her adopted country and her husband sent the Queen of Hungary and the Duchess of Milan an invitation which under the present political circumstances Mary had no need to refuse—an invitation to take part in a great hunt in the famous forest of Compiègne.

The English ambassadors heard of this plan in fear and trembling. They hastened to reassure their prime minister, Cromwell, that the trip to Compiègne was no more than "a gala eating party,"³ meanwhile doing their best to obtain an interview with the Regent before her departure. But they were obliged to report that the Queen had wriggled out of every possible occasion to see them and that they had to follow her to France.⁴ In Valenciennes they overtook the royal party, and were admitted to an audience at 8 o'clock in the morning, finding the Queen in her sitting room, surrounded by her ladies and just about to go to table.⁵ Once more Mary put them off by saying that she could take no further steps before her meeting with the French king. Although the nobles of Mary's suite did their best to make up for her cool attitude by showering in-

vitations and attentions upon them, the ambassadors were nevertheless painfully aware of the rebuff they had suffered. Their commentary upon the festive gathering at Compiègne was accordingly sour and scornful. King Francis, they wrote to England, had paid all the expenses, even for the Queen of Hungary's suite, but whether he had achieved any success remained doubtful; at least they had not yet "got wind" of any agreements having been made. Some of the initiated valued the presents Francis had bestowed upon the Queen and the Duchess and their ladies at 50,000 crowns, others spoke of "only" 30,000 crowns, but it was certain that the Queen herself had received a diamond worth at least 20,000 crowns from him.⁶

Francis certainly laid himself out to fête his new Habsburg friend, and Mary must have had her own opinion about the brilliant crowd surrounding him, who had undoubtedly been told to get around the Netherlands guests by the most charming courtesy. Queen Éléonore, radiant with happiness at her success and sparkling in the most fashionable dresses and fairy-tale jewelry, was nevertheless put in the shade by the Duchess of Étampes, Francis' latest mistress, the great rival of her predecessor, Diane de Poitiers. Diane now devoted herself to the amorous education of Francis' glum and silent son, the Dauphin Henry. There was also young Henry's gifted but not very attractive Italian wife, Catharine de Medici, who with the decrepit and sickly Francis I and the young, brilliant Duchess of Étampes formed a curious coterie in contrast to her own gloomy husband and his stately, much older mistress. There was the Connétable Anne de Montmorency, sworn enemy of Madame d'Étampes, who invited the Habsburg ladies to visit his castle of Chantilly, where Mary of Hungary found art treasures equal to those of the famous Burgundian collections. There was the Duke of Vendôme, the most elegant, refined, and frivolous nobleman of France, dictator of fashion and conqueror of hearts, who bombarded the Duchess of Milan with compliments and declarations of love, which to his sincere astonishment received no response whatever.

They all flashed and shimmered with jewels and satin, tinkled and clanged with gold chains and silver armor. Danced and flirted and intrigued, hated and desired each other, banqueted and feasted till deep in the night. No wonder that the Queen of Hungary felt "a little troubled in her head", as the English am-

bassadors wrote to London, and fatigued and somewhat upset by so much splendor.⁷ She let the ambassadors know that she intended to journey back to Brussels at a very slow pace, spending the nights in small villages on the way. Her Majesty would not like to see the gentlemen obliged, like herself, to put up with primitive accommodation and she therefore requested them to precede her to the capital⁸—a gracious gesture which the gentlemen did not fail to take as another indication of the Queen's wish to postpone the question of the marriage.

The Regent was in fact at this moment obliged to make use of a method which ran counter to her resolute, purposeful nature. Despite her many requests for instructions in the matter of the English marriage, she had still received no guidance from the Emperor, who in this case, as so often, preferred to answer his sister's desperate appeals with silence, in the conviction that difficult problems often solve themselves if one does nothing about them. In January 1539 Mary, at her wits' end, at last wrote: "I beg you once more, Monseigneur, to tell me if I am to keep these negotiations dragging on, for I can no longer do this without the most shameless hypocrisy."⁹

But Charles still remained silent, leaving his sister to follow her own devices in a situation steadily becoming more painful. During one of the audiences she was now and then obliged to grant the English ambassadors, and which took place, despite the winter darkness, between seven and eight in the morning in her bedroom, Mary betrayed her consciousness of the dubious role she had to play, by blushing deeply when one of the gentlemen unexpectedly asked her if she would permit him a frank question.¹⁰ This sudden blush upon the face of the woman whom the English diplomats recognized as their superior, left them no longer in doubt about the eventual failure of their efforts. And indeed, the friendship between the Emperor and Francis I led to an ever more unfavorable relationship between these two and their "brother" of England; a relationship that was not improved when the Pope finally excommunicated Henry in January 1539. Christina of Denmark did not become Queen of England and was spared an experience that might have ended in a violent death.

The period of quiet, which in 1538 seemed to have dawned for the Netherlands, was but of short duration. This time serious internal troubles demanded the Regent's attention. Their direct

cause was, as so often before, the chronic lack of money from which the government suffered and which it remained unable to alter as long as the Provincial Estates refused to pay the funds asked of them.

The relation between Ghent, the powerful, independent Flemish city, and the Habsburg regime was at best but an armed peace, often even a "cold war". If ever the able-bodied men of Ghent were to gather under their "Great Standard", it might mean an immediate threat to the central government, the kernel of a revolt which was always brewing within the walls of the city and which even a single scornful anti-Habsburg cry might bring to explosion.

While the country was threatened by foreign enemies the government dared not run the risk of such a revolt, likely as it would be to spread over all the Low Countries. Therefore it did not press for the raising of troops which might form so much explosive material. But when the war with France had taken a favorable turn, the Regent felt strong enough to stand up to the arrogant city. She simply ignored the fact that on the last occasion when Ghent had refused to contribute money and had demanded to bring men into the field under its own flag, she had accepted this arrangement; and now she gave notice to the city authorities that Ghent should adhere to the decision of the three other sections of Flanders which had voted funds and that she expected prompt payment of the amount still due. When the city rejected this demand, she at once proceeded to take severe measures. She ordered the arrest of burghers of Ghent who happened to be in other cities, declaring that they would not be set free until Ghent paid its debts. Thereupon she sent government representatives to the recalcitrant city to convince the municipal authorities of the legality of her demands and the measures she had put through.

But this time too, she had failed to take into account her subjects' violent reactions to any interference, real or imagined, with their privileges. As soon as the cause of the quarrel with the government had penetrated to the citizens of Ghent, they became suspicious, and their anger increased further when at his sister's request the Emperor sent an order from Spain that the debt should be paid immediately by the city's taxpayers, failing which they would be arrested and their possessions confiscated. The longer the dispute lasted, the more the conviction gained ground

among the people of Ghent that they had been betrayed and sold by their own leaders to the hated Habsburg regime. The ancient rights and freedoms upon which the municipality based its attitude began to take on fantastic dimensions in their excited imagination. The mood of revolt was further strengthened by news of families fleeing, of a reign of terror which would soon spread over the whole of Flanders. Fights between burghers and tax officials led to new arrests and even death sentences. The nervous tension increased, rumor followed upon rumor. People began to tell each other of a privilege supposedly called the "Repurchase of Flanders", and said to have been granted to Ghent by a Count of Flanders when the city had bought back his entire territory for him after he had lost it in a gamble to a Count of Holland. The Repurchase of Flanders contained, they assured each other, a clause to the effect that Ghent should never again be subject to taxation it had not previously approved.

This rumor caused terrible excitement. The government's attention should be drawn to this precious document. Where was it? Was it nowhere to be found? Then it must have been stolen! Treason, treason! people whisper in their houses at first, are soon saying aloud in the streets and squares. They now demand that all the privileges of the city be read aloud to them, the Repurchase of Flanders included. They should be printed in good clear Flemish so that everyone can read and understand them. If the documents are not to be found, they must have been embezzled! Someone has broken into the city's Secret Archives, documents have been falsified and stolen, and everyone knows who has done this! Can people not remember that a few years ago one of the three keys to the Secret Archives was mislaid—so-called! That key was replaced by a new one. It was Renier van Huffel who lost it, he who is now an alderman and hated by many guild brothers. And who was it who allowed his key to be used as a model by the city locksmith, when he received the order to make a new one? That was the then deacon, Lieven Pijn. It is clear as daylight! The municipal government of 1536 is guilty of treason, they stole and falsified the privileges. Seize them!

It is the artisans' guilds that demand this and they take the law into their own hands. Lieven Pijn is the first to be seized. The locksmiths are also arrested, and other people assumed to have witnessed the burglary of the Secret Archives. The hated Van

Huffel manages to escape. In vain the sitting magistrates attempt to call the wealthy burghers to arms against the rebellious artisans, whom they accuse of communistic leanings. But the magistrate's plan leaks out. The workers take up arms, occupy the gates, the prisons. Ghent is in their hands, and they now take their nickname of "Creasers" (which may have meant "Screamers") as a name of honor.

The revolt is in full swing. There is a cry for "right, law and justice", and Lieven Pijn is dragged to the rack and questioned about the so-called burglary of the Secret Archives, about the administration of the city's finances, about the origin of his own fortune. With broken, dislocated limbs he is carried back to his cell on a chair. But he has admitted nothing. The torture is repeated with as little result. Then he is declared guilty and beheaded in the square.

When the crowd sees his blood flow, an ecstasy of power runs through them. Ghent is free, strong in unity, nothing and nobody shall enslave her. They remember the detested treaty of Cadsant, by which in 1492 Duke Maximilian had curtailed their ancient freedoms. In 1515 "Count Charles" confirmed that treaty once again, locking away another humiliating parchment in the Secret Archives. Now at last they are powerful enough to put an end to the Habsburg slavery. The armed guilds demand destruction of the document, the "Calfskin", which has annulled many treasured old rights. The city government, which did not dare protest when the death penalty was demanded for Lieven Pijn, now shrinks from the public denunciation of a treaty imposed by the sovereign himself. The destruction of a charter bearing the signature of the Emperor, the aldermen declare, is equivalent to a deed of violence against the person of the Emperor himself. But the revolutionary Creasers reply that the Emperor was only fifteen when he imposed the Calfskin upon them. He did not know what he was doing. It certainly cannot have been his intention to curtail Ghent's freedoms. The Calfskin must be destroyed—burned or torn up in public. They will not disperse before they have seen this happen with their own eyes. To calm the dangerous crowd the aldermen consent to produce the document.

It is spread upon the table. It lies there with its imposing seal like a challenge. But now it is too late for reflection. The first

deacon cuts it through with a knife, the deacon of the weavers does the same, the aldermen follow their exciting example. Exulting in their sense of power and self-confidence the bystanders take possession of the fragments, pulling and tearing and breaking the parchment and its seal into a thousand pieces. In a wild intoxication of freedom several people swallow the hard pieces down. Others stick them triumphantly in their caps, or tread them under foot. Ghent is free, free!

Mary of Hungary was in The Hague when the news of the revolt reached her, and she instantly saw that it could have the gravest consequences. In consultation with her Council she first took measures to isolate the revolt, warned all Flemish castellans, mobilized her captains in the southern provinces, and sent an express messenger to the Emperor to convince him that she regarded the situation as uncommonly serious, and to beg him to come to the Netherlands himself to suppress the revolution. Against the approaching armies of France the Regent had dared to pit herself alone. Against the people of Ghent, gathered under their Great Standard inside their walls, her courage failed. She seemed to sense that in this case powers were beginning to manifest themselves to which Habsburg would ultimately prove unequal.

Pending the Emperor's instructions the government proceeded with the greatest care, as though the city of Ghent were a dangerous nervous patient who should above all not be upset. The Queen summoned a number of representatives of the other departments of Flanders to Brussels and asked them for advice, since they knew the people of Flanders better than anyone. On her side, she declared, she would do everything possible to end the troubles "with gentleness, wisdom and friendship," because she knew it would deeply distress His Majesty to have to use force and make the good suffer with the bad.

Her request put the Flemish gentlemen in a quandary. They could only blame the behavior of the people of Ghent, they told the Queen. Yet it was difficult for them to advise Her Majesty, except that they begged her to act as leniently as possible. It might be useful, they suggested, if she went to Flanders in person.

While the government in Brussels waited for the imperial courier to bring the answer to the problem of how to deal with

Ghent, new revolutionary events were taking place in the latter. Again a number of suspected magistrates were imprisoned; it was decided to put the city into a state of defense.

Despite all this Mary maintained her conciliatory attitude. She sent two members of her Council and the president of the Great Council of Malines to the rebellious city for the purpose of trying to bring its citizens to reason. She gave them full powers to consent to the demands of the Creesers, provided these latter agreed to let the law take its normal course, to make no arrests and use no torture, and to send the civic guards home. But when the envoys reached Ghent they found the city in an extremely tense mood. The burghers were now demanding not merely the replacement of a few aldermen but the renewal of the whole body. The Regent's commissioners informed her that under the circumstances it would serve no useful purpose to seek contact, according to her instructions, with the leaders of the movement, who themselves no longer had any influence upon the excited armed masses. The only possibility now was to give in. If the Regent refused, it would be truly disastrous. The inevitable consequence would be the destruction of the city, the ruin of countless well-to-do burghers, the devastation of the surrounding countryside.

While the Regent and her Council were still drawing up a negative reply to the urgent request of the negotiators, an express messenger from these gentlemen arrived in Brussels with the news that they could no longer be sure of their lives if the government did not yield immediately. Mary's Council advised her that one could not allow the Emperor's three servants who had undertaken the mission to be sacrificed. And the Regent signed the decision authorizing her representatives to approve a new College of Aldermen, but she noted at the end of the document that she had only consented under pressure and to avoid greater evil—"Par force et pour éviter plus grand mal, ay consenti ceste commission. Marie." This additional phrase was however cautiously covered with the wax of the seal with which the document was provided. And finally the people of Ghent were informed of the decision, with the added condition that the city was to bear the entire responsibility if the Emperor were unwilling to approve the agreement.

The election of the board of aldermen, however, caused new troubles which were supported by revolutionary movements

throughout Flanders. Everywhere the population followed the same line of conduct. They resorted to arms, took magistrates prisoner, demanded a public reading of their ancient privileges. In Oudenaerde things even came to such a pass that the Regent's representatives, who had been sent there to calm the excitement, were formally besieged by the infuriated crowd in the castle in which they had sought safety.

This alarming news put an end to the patience Mary, albeit with difficulty, had shown until now. She told the members of the Council and the hastily summoned Knights of the Golden Fleece that together they were all responsible for the release of the threatened government representatives, whose leader, the Count de Lalaing, was also a member of the Order of the Golden Fleece. She offered to turn her silver and gold table service into money in order to send troops immediately to the relief of the castle. Within twenty-four hours the mobilization of available detachments was in full swing. It proved to be high time. A servant of the Count arrived in Brussels with the report that the besiegers of the castle had a big cannon, against which, should they use it, the walls would not stand.

One of the beleaguered councilors succeeded, however, in making contact with the besiegers and even in winning their confidence. De Lalaing promised that no government troops would be sent to Oudenaerde, and he hastened to warn the Regent that the improvement in the situation would certainly be undone if even a single soldier showed himself in the neighborhood of that city. In that case all the well-to-do inhabitants would be put to the sword.

In Courtrai, in Bruges, in Ypres, in Lille, everywhere the same scenes were enacted. In order to be prepared for everything Mary sent military patrols to all the cities, villages, and hamlets around Ghent. For the most part these consisted of scarcely ten or twenty men, but the measure proved sufficient to infuriate Ghent. They haughtily requested the Regent to withdraw the soldiers who had ensconced themselves around their city and to entrust the guarding of the castles to men of Ghent or to the local country population. At the same time they demanded that Mary should extradite fugitives from Ghent under her protection who, they declared, had to answer for such capital crimes that the imperial authority ought not to protect them. At the head of this challenging missive they had chosen to write no more polite form of address than:

"*A la royne*", and they signed with similar arrogance: "the magistrates of both benches and the two deacons of the city of Ghent, entirely yours."

It was the haughty tone of this document which caused Mary once more to call her brother to the Netherlands. Subsequent communications from the city equally confirmed her in the conviction that only the Emperor himself could now save the situation. Ghent reproached her for bringing danger to the whole country by not recalling her soldiers. When Mary decided to visit a number of Flemish towns and villages in an attempt at least to keep them on the Habsburg side, her representatives in these places, hearing that she wished to be accompanied by her bodyguard, besought her to give up this military escort, as everywhere the mere appearance of a few soldiers would set off revolt. The Regent felt obliged to abandon her journey. She was in fact at that moment the prisoner of her subjects.

To the Creesers of Ghent the Habsburg regime in the Netherlands was already over and done with. "What business of ours is the Queen?" cried a demagogue from Ghent to the eagerly listening people of Oudenaerde. "Put her in a convent! She would like to eat all we have, and one need give her mandate no credence, since she no longer holds the government of Flanders, for I and other citizens of Ghent have given it to the High Bailiff."

CHAPTER FIVE

Hatred and Disillusion



Et peus affirmer à V.M. et prendre Dieu en tesmoing, que le gouverner m'est tant aborrible, que j'aimerois mieux gagner ma vie que de m'y mectre.

And I can affirm to Y.M. and call God to witness, that to govern is so abhorrent to me, that I would rather earn my living than occupy myself with it.

Mary to Charles V,
August 15, 1555

CHARLES V had been kept too well informed by his sister concerning the tensions and troubles in the countries under her charge not to grasp the fact that giving in to the demands of Ghent would have the most catastrophic consequences for his authority in the Netherlands. His reaction to Mary's alarming reports was unexpectedly quick and showed on the one hand how serious he considered the situation, and on the other hand what complete confidence he placed in her prudence. He sent her a number of blank sheets of paper provided with his name, so that her letters to the burghers of Ghent might be reinforced by the imperial signature. He also despatched de Roeulx to tell the city government that he would shortly arrive, and that if the people of Ghent did not at once behave as good, obedient subjects, he would punish them in a way they would never be able to forget.

The Creesers, who received the imperial representative courteously but with a defiant self-confidence, had not expected this threatening tone, and they refused to believe that the letters which

de Roeulx read to them really originated with the Emperor. This was once again the Queen's work they said, and the Queen they did not like at all. If the Emperor himself came to Ghent they were quite sure they would be able to make their action clear to him. They were even convinced that he would be grateful to them, and would grant their wishes, which after all were in the interest of all his countries.

Roeulx's moderation and their own self-assurance tended to blind the revolutionaries to the danger threatening them. They did not grasp in its true significance the extraordinary fact that in order to reach the Netherlands the Emperor did not hesitate to take the enormous risk of a long journey through France. They went so far as to send a deputation to greet him and explain to him once more the causes of the disturbances. Even the manner in which Charles received them does not seem to have opened their eyes. He told them curtly that he had come despite great personal danger and the difficulties of a midwinter journey, to restore order in Ghent and administer just punishment to the city for its rebelliousness. He intended to do this in a manner that would set an example to all his other countries, cities, and subjects. After this announcement the deputation was told to return to Ghent.

Thus it was that Charles V prepared to destroy forever the glory of his native city—the democratic freedom of its burghers. On February 14, 1540, he entered Ghent, in the company of his sister the Regent, his niece the Duchess of Milan, countless ambassadors and a great number of Netherlands, Spanish, Italian, and German nobles and princes of the Church. The military escort was formed by infantry, cavalry, and artillery, all ready for action. For six hours the burghers of Ghent watched the procession, armed to the teeth, move by. The entry of the baggage took several days. Word went about that the overcrowded city housed not less than 60,000 people and 15,000 horses.

Although Ghent promptly took on the appearance of a city under enemy occupation, where military patrols paraded the streets day and night and the squares echoed with commands and the metallic sound of heavily armored horsemen, measures of revenge were as yet not forthcoming. A new municipal government was at once set up and people imprisoned by the Creesers were freed. Tension subsided. Charles' plan had succeeded. The people of Ghent began to feel safe. The conviction gained ground

that they would get off with a stiff fine: perhaps they would have to pay the costs of the Emperor's journey to the Netherlands . . .

But on the third day of Charles' stay in Ghent the leaders of the rebellious movement, who had not even thought it necessary to take flight or to hide in the city, were practically all arrested simultaneously. Soldiers were posted on all the squares and street corners. From that moment on, arrests were incessant. Charles' revenge had begun.

On the twenty-fourth of February, the Emperor's birthday, the entire Corporation was summoned to the palace. Surrounded by his nobles and the members of his Council, Charles ordered an extensive report to be read to the burghers concerning their misdeeds in the preceding month against his Imperial Majesty as Count of Flanders. The document was in fact one long accusation of *lèse-majesté*, ending with the statement that the burghers of Ghent had forfeited every claim upon their lives and possessions, as well as on all their privileges.

In speechless consternation the city's representatives gazed at one another. They stammered something, whispered to each other, and finally requested to be given the communication in writing and a little time to prepare their answer. The Emperor granted them a respite of ten days, and, deeply shaken, the city government left the Prinsenhof.

At the end of this period the burghers were called back to the palace. In their answer to the Emperor they had the audacity to blame what had happened on the weak, bad government under which their city and all the Netherlands provinces had suffered since his departure in 1532. Because of it dangerous dissatisfaction had arisen among the unemployed workers. Ghent had had every right to refuse payment of the war subsidy, they declared, and without the city's approval it could not be imposed upon the surrounding countryside either. Had the government accepted their offer of infantry, the troubles would never have arisen. All the unemployed, the beggars and vagabonds who had had such a large part in the revolt, would have been put under the Great Standard of Ghent at his Imperial Majesty's disposal in his struggle with the King of France.

When the city had stated its case, the judge-advocate of the Grand Council of Malines pointed out to the Emperor that his subjects had had the insolence in his very presence to blame their crimes on the bad government he had set over them—another act

of most serious lèse-majesté. They had sought to compel the Queen by force and threats to grant their demands. He accordingly requested the Emperor to punish them by excluding them from every right to life and possessions and all their privileges, making them an example to other countries and cities, and so to arrange the city government that in the future they would never again have the means to undertake such a revolt. With this the meeting was adjourned.

Charles considered it advantageous to leave the city in uncertainty while his advisers were drafting the new form of government to be imposed upon it. Meanwhile the first trials of those who had been arrested were held. After being compelled by torture to the most divergent confessions, they were found guilty and beheaded; their bodies were exhibited outside the city gates on a wheel, their heads on poles. Their possessions were confiscated in favor of His Majesty the Emperor himself. Their fate left no doubt as to the seriousness of their offense, soon to be revenged on the city as a whole.

The city aldermen tried to prevent the execution of further sentences by calling on the Emperor's clemency. Charles curtly assured them that he attached no credence to their humble expressions of regret. He knew very well that in their hearts they were as rebellious as ever, and that their only regret was for the failure of their plan. It was his intention to make such action impossible in the future. With these words he dismissed the aldermen.

In their consternation they requested an interview with the Regent, but they were clumsy enough to open this audience with an address of welcome, after which they begged the Queen in the name of all the good burghers of Ghent to forgive the misdeeds of a few uprooted criminal individuals and to intercede for the desperate burghers with her brother the Emperor.

The tone of icy irony in which Mary answered the nervous aldermen's address deprived them at once of any hope they might still have cherished. With a charming gentleness, the insincerity of which she scarcely attempted to conceal, she called the gentlemen's attention to the fact that she had already been in their city for over a month, so that their words of welcome, for which, however, she thanked them very much, came rather late. To her regret she had been obliged to note that they had expressed

themselves in most scornful terms about her rule. But she had refrained from asking God in her prayers to avenge this unprecedented insult. She intended to let herself be guided by mildness and compassion in the future, as she had done in the past. This was also the intention of His Majesty the Emperor who, as the gentlemen knew, had come all the way from Spain with the special purpose of restoring order in Ghent. She would gladly intercede for the city with His Majesty, and beg him to take the very best measures to win for Ghent more than ever before the reputation of being one of the most beautiful cities of the Netherlands.

These cool words made it clear to the aldermen that the Queen had no inclination whatever to exercise the virtue of charity. Mary on her part knew she was speaking to the representatives of a condemned city and she considered the verdict just.

A few days later the final sentence was pronounced on the unhappy city. Charles again surrounded himself with a brilliant following and, seated upon a specially prepared throne, heard the judge-advocate of the Grand Council of Malines read his statement to the whole corporation of Ghent:

"Found guilty of the crimes of disloyalty toward their ruler, of disobedience, breach of contract, revolt, rebellion and lèse-majesté, the guilds and the municipality of the city of Ghent are declared to have forfeited all their privileges, rights, freedoms, customs and habits, which granted any privilege, right or authority to the community, to the guilds, or to the weavers and their adherents. We have deprived them of these, and do so deprive them forever. In consequence our heirs and successors, Counts and Countesses of Flanders, shall in future upon their entry into these our lands and our country, no longer take the oath upon these privileges, rights, customs and habits; they shall only take the oath upon the new constitution which we intend to prepare for the government of the city of Ghent. All documents of privileges, the red book as well as the black book in which they are registered, shall be handed over to us to do with as we please. It is from now on forbidden to refer to them, or to make use of them in law, or to keep copies or extracts from them, on pain of our indignation and of condemnation for forgery, not to mention further legal punishment. . . .

"As reparation they shall pay us, besides their share in the

subsidy, the sum of 150,000 gold carolus guilders as down payment and yearly 6,000 gold carolus guilders in favor of our domains. They shall remit the payment of interest of 550 pounds, due to us, dating from the time of our greatgrandfather Charles [The Bold]. To that purpose they shall hand over to us for destruction the bonds acknowledging the debts of this ruler. The burghers shall pay compensation to all those who have suffered damage as a result of the troubles. Loans taken up by the municipality during this time shall be paid back. The burghers shall fill in the so-called Rijtcanal at their own expense. It is forbidden to them ever again to dig out this or any other canal. They shall also within two months and at their own expense fill in all canals and waterways between the Antwerp gate and the Schelde. We reserve to ourselves the right to level certain old gates, towers and walls, which we shall make known within eight days. The materials from this demolition shall be used to build a fortress which has been begun in St. Bavo. Upon these conditions we are prepared as a special favor to forgive the municipality as well as the inhabitants of the city the crimes named above, with exception of those guilty persons who have sought to escape their doom by flight, those who have committed any crimes since our arrival, and those accused of high treason, about whose fate we shall shortly decide."

Twenty-four hours later the new constitution of Ghent was made known. It provided for a city government set up by the sovereign. Every trace of municipal autonomy vanished. Ghent, once the most independent and powerful of the Netherlands cities, lost all political independence, all self-government, all authority over the surrounding country.

Crushed by this verdict, which robbed them of the most precious of their possessions—the right to self-government—the burghers of Ghent were obliged to subject themselves to a cruel ceremony of expiation. The representatives of the municipality, dressed in black, beltless and bareheaded; fifty members of the Creesers, wrapped only in linen rags, barefoot and bareheaded, with a rope around their necks, which for their greater humiliation had been laid there by the hangman himself—two by two, according to their former rank and position, they moved in silent procession to the inner court of the Terwalle palace where the Emperor awaited them, seated on a throne beside the Regent

and surrounded by representatives of his entire empire. An enormous mass of people filled the courtyard, crowded in front of the palace windows, clung to the chimneys and gutters of the surrounding houses. But among this mob of sensation-seekers there were scarcely any citizens of Ghent. The other burghers of the humiliated city remained hidden in their houses in anger and shame.

Before the imperial throne, the burghers went down on their knees. While the town pensionary pronounced the supplication for forgiveness as laid down in the sentence, many of the kneeling men could not restrain their tears. Whether they were tears of sorrow or of helpless rage, the eye witness who wrote the account of the ceremony could not decide. But no one present doubted that the burghers of Ghent were kneeling before their master not out of contrition, but only by hard necessity.

After the expiation formula had been pronounced, a stillness fell over the courtyard. Charles V sat as though considering whether he would grant forgiveness, or not.

In this silence suddenly a woman's voice was heard. It was Mary of Hungary, who turned to her brother and asked him to grant a general pardon to all the burghers and inhabitants of his good city of Ghent in memory of the fact that he himself had been born there.

In a low voice the Emperor replied that, out of brotherly affection for herself and great pity for his poor subjects of Ghent, he wished to be a generous ruler and be moved by sympathy rather than by the severity of the law. He therefore granted the pardon she asked, on condition that the city behave in accordance with the arrangements he had made. If he were assured that this would happen, he on his side would be a kind ruler and with God's help maintain law and peace.

After these words the burghers rose from their kneeling position and left the courtyard in the order imposed upon them.

On April 30, 1540, the ambassador of England's Henry VIII reported to his master: ¹

"This day the Emperor gave sentence against the town of Gand for their rebellion; a sentence so severe that it will go nigh to undo all the town."

Later ages have indeed confirmed the fact that Ghent and the

surrounding Flemish country have never surmounted Charles V's vengeance. The port of Antwerp in Brabant, where the citizens retained their freedom, owes its fame and wealth among other things to the downfall of its sister city.

Years later Mary herself, in a memorandum to Charles on the cares and burdens of the regency, put into words² the bitter experience this episode had been to her:

"Even if I ever come to possess all the ability necessary for governing—and I am far from it—I still have sufficient experience (beside the fact that the books, Holy Scripture as well as others, are full of it) to know that it is impossible for a woman in peacetime, and even more in time of war, to do her duty as regent towards God, her sovereign, and her own sense of honor. For in peace time it is unavoidable, in addition to all the meetings and cares of daily affairs which any government brings with it, that whoever guides the government of these provinces must mix with as many people as possible, in order to win the sympathy of both nobility and middle classes. For these countries do not know the submissiveness which is indispensable in a monarchy, yet they are neither an oligarchy nor a republic proper. For a woman, especially if she is a widow, it is not feasible to mix thus freely with people. Of necessity I myself have had to do more in this respect than I really wanted. Moreover, a woman is never so much respected and feared as a man, whatever her position.

"If one is conducting the government of these countries in time of war, and one cannot in person enter the battle, one is faced with an insoluble problem. One receives all the blows and is blamed for all mistakes made by others, and is reproached if one does not carry out what everyone thinks he can demand. All the complainants can be heard throughout the entire country. But the accused stands alone and cannot answer for herself everywhere at once. And if things then do not go as expected, it is not difficult to make the people believe that the woman who heads the government is to blame for everything, and for this reason she is hated and held in contempt by the people."

That Mary of Hungary suffered more from her lack of power as a woman than her predecessor, the truly feminine Margaret of Austria, was undoubtedly the consequence of her own qualities. In the continual struggle for power in which her position as the Emperor's representative involved her with those who were

meant to be her helpers, and with the subjects she had soon learned to regard as opponents, Mary would have preferred to use the weapons she possessed by nature and which her masculine adversaries were accustomed to use against her. Mary of Hungary was hard, authoritarian, hot-tempered and unyielding. She possessed unlimited physical and mental courage and never doubted her own right, which was no other than that of the Emperor, head of the Habsburg dynasty. She lacked completely all the feminine characteristics by which Margaret of Austria had so often triumphed: tact, flexibility, the power to adapt herself, humor and charm. She possessed the same passionate singleness of purpose which had doomed her Spanish mother, Joanna the Mad, to such tragic abnormality, and which had given her aunt Catharine of Aragon a truly heroic strength of mind in her disastrous relationship with Henry VIII of England. In this Mary was her mother's daughter, but of stronger fiber, the true daughter of that Isabella the Great of Aragon and Castile who knew neither doubt nor irresolution. She lacked the sunny Austrian charm which served her grandfather Maximilian's purpose so much better than power or wealth, and which had made her aunt Margaret beloved in her lonely post of Regent of the Netherlands.

What Margaret had been able to put right by a smile, a word of praise or a joke, Mary aggravated by a cynical remark, a biting comment. Margaret had been able to laugh and forgive; Mary neither forgave nor forgot. While Margaret could hide her feelings behind a charming courtesy, that strongest weapon of diplomacy, Mary showed her weak point by blushing or turning pale, by some gesture of annoyance, by ignoring an opponent instead of greeting him with a smile, as Margaret would have done. Mary did not know that one can sometimes conquer by giving in and that one does not disarm an enemy by offending him, nor bind a helper more closely by reproaches, however well deserved. Her subjects thought her hard, even cruel, and she did indeed often give evidence of an insensitivity and a lack of compassion which may have had some relation to her mother's mental derangement. The deepest emotions Mary of Hungary used to express were caused by injured pride.

Her powerlessness, brought home to her by the revolt of Ghent, and the reproaches of bad government flung at her by the rebels, gave her occasion once again to ask her brother to relieve her of the regency.³ Had he received this oft-repeated request by

letter, Charles would probably have laid it aside as he had done before. But this time Mary made her plea in person, and though he had not the least intention of depriving himself of a support he valued to the full and considered indispensable, he still did not wish to frighten his sister by a positive refusal. He assured her that he would relieve her of the office which oppressed her so much as soon as he should have come back to the Netherlands, as he was planning to do shortly. But he followed up these promises, according to Mary's own words, with a command that she should obey him, her sovereign and master, and keep the regency for a short time longer.

Mary acted upon this command, as she was to declare later, out of reverence, obedience, and sisterly affection and trusting that the Emperor would keep his promise. On October 14, 1540, before leaving for the German Reichstag, Charles renewed her commission as regent over the Netherlands, giving her complete power to govern in his name, with the urgent instruction, however, that she should conduct herself in everything according to the advice of her Council. The "*corde au col*", from which Mary had thought to free herself, was once again drawn tighter.

While Charles was in the Netherlands Mary's position automatically changed from that of representative to principal counselor of the Emperor. She herself worked on with undiminished energy, but she must have noticed in her brother certain symptoms of mental fatigue, a preoccupation with the future, which made him seem older than his forty years. She saw in Charles' presence an opportunity to conquer by arms the duchy of Gelre, where the new duke, William of Cleves, was acting in a manner more and more inimical to Habsburg; but the Emperor would have none of such an offensive. He wished to save himself for what he considered his real vocation: to throw back the Turks, to subdue the Protestants in the German Empire. He was chiefly preoccupied by the question of how to arrange the Habsburg succession in the Netherlands. He was deeply convinced that as head of the Habsburg Dynasty, Emperor of Germany, King of Spain and ruler of the Netherlands, he had a superhuman task to carry out which in future would have to be divided among several members of his House, and how this was to be accomplished to the greater glory and power of that House had been occupying his mind for many years.

In conversations with his sister during these months Charles introduced the idea of his possible abdication. After the conquest of Tunis, when he appeared to have reached the zenith of his power, he seemed to realize that his further career could only be a gradual decline. A sense of weariness and discouragement, probably not unlike the depression from which Mary of Hungary suffered at certain times, took possession of him. The thought of freeing himself from his unbearably heavy burden seems never to have left him from that moment, though fifteen years were to elapse before he could take that step.

To Mary, who had given herself with such complete self-sacrifice to what she considered her sacred duty of standing by her brother in the task God had laid upon him, it must have been a shock to hear him express such thoughts. But the realization that Charles, whom she admired and loved so sincerely, also found his task unbearably heavy must on the other hand have given her the strength to continue doing her utmost to ease his burden.

Charles' sojourn with Mary and Ferdinand in Ghent gave him the opportunity to discuss these most important problems with them and with various special advisers. Mary's conviction that the Netherlands ought to be governed not by a regent but by a ruler of their own, tipped the scales in these discussions: the Emperor came to the conclusion that he would leave this part of his Empire to his eldest daughter, for whom he was considering a marriage with the Duke of Orleans, second son of Francis I, with the object of putting an end to the struggle for power between France and Habsburg, of which the Netherlands had now for so many years been the victim. Charles even considered whether in that case it would not be suitable to raise the Netherlands, together with Burgundy and Gelre, to the status of a kingdom. If Francis I agreed to this plan he would, in return for what was offered to his second son, have to relinquish his own claim to the dukedom of Milan, the eternal bone of contention between France and Habsburg. Then Charles' idea for the future balance of power in Europe could be realized: His brother Ferdinand and after him the Austrian branch of Habsburg, to be Emperor of Germany, Archduke of Austria and King of Hungary and Bohemia. His son Philip to be King of Spain, Naples and Sicily, Duke of Milan, in short, supreme ruler over Italy and the entire Mediterranean basin. His daughter Mary and her French husband to be King and Queen of the Netherlands. In this manner France and Habs-

burg together would be able to make an end to the conquests of the Turks, subdue the German Protestants, restore peace in Europe. It was a majestic plan. . . .

But although Francis I was old, decrepit, and ill, his hearing was still sufficiently acute to detect an echo of those much feared vowels A.E.I.O.U.—*Austriae Est Imperare Omni Universo* *—in the Emperor's offer. A few weeks after the humiliation of Ghent the French ambassadors made the announcement to the Emperor that their king did not wish to accept the Habsburg proposals: he wished to keep his right to the dukedom of Milan, and believed that the status quo should be maintained.

The united Europe which Charles V thought he could create remained a dream. Before his departure for the German Reichstag Charles invested his son Philip with the dukedom of Milan as an answer to the inimical gesture of Francis, who concluded a treaty of friendship with the new Duke of Gelre. The future of the Netherlands was to remain undecided until the Emperor, or after him his son Philip, should have found the right solution.

Convinced that he was leaving the Low Countries on the eve of a new war with France, Charles once more undertook an exhaustive tour of inspection of his defenses in the southern provinces. As before, Mary accompanied him. On January 7, 1541, she bade him farewell at Luxembourg, trusting that she would see him again soon, and would then be relieved for good of the difficult task which she was now, after a whole year, taking upon herself once more.

* It is for Austria to command the whole universe.

CHAPTER SIX

With Fire and Sword



Il faut considérer comme un miracle que les Pays-Bas ne soient pas perdus pour Votre Majesté. Dieu y a travaillé en premier lieu, et après lui, l'extrême travail, soin et diligence de la reine.

It must be considered a miracle that the Low Countries are not lost to Your Majesty. God worked there in the first place, and after Him the extreme labor, care and diligence of the Queen.

De Praet to Charles V

MARY'S second regency began under most inauspicious omens. The internal situation had only apparently been improved by the subjection of Ghent. Flemish refugees had settled all over the Netherlands and their border regions, trumpeting forth their hatred of Habsburg and finding an echo in all who, for the sake of religion, in protest against mounting taxes, or in their desire for political independence—for one or all of these reasons were open to revolutionary passions. The ever-increasing internal revolt in the Netherlands offered the foreign enemies of the Habsburgs a useful point of contact for intrigue and bribery, against which the Regent was obliged to maintain a whole army of spies and informers.

France, Gelre, and Denmark again joined forces and surrounded the Low Countries with an iron ring of troop concentrations, warships, and privateers. In addition to her routine work Mary of Hungary was once again obliged to preside over a Netherlands war council, in order to prepare the country against the moment of possible attack.

The moment came, brought on by the Emperor himself. After the Reichstag at Regensburg, Charles had gone to the Mediterranean in order to strike a fresh blow against the maritime power of the Turks in North Africa. Three years before Mary had most urgently advised him against such an undertaking, and this expedition against Algiers must have filled her with the greatest concern, surrounded as she knew herself to be by enemies who would proceed to the attack at the first news of a Habsburg setback.

What Mary feared happened. Not the Turks, but the gales of autumn caused the destruction of the great fleet with which the Emperor was heading for North Africa. Scarcely had news of the disaster reached Europe when the anti-Habsburg coalition unchained a veritable war of nerves, culminating in the rumor that the Emperor had been drowned and that his brother Ferdinand had also lost his life in Mediterranean waters. There was no doubt that a general attack was imminent. But not one of Mary's countless spies could tell her whether the initial blow was to be expected from the Danish side, from Gelre or from France, or whether Friesland, Holland or Luxembourg would be the first to be invaded.

The whole country was in a state of siege and with feverish haste land defenses were being prepared in the North, the East, the South, while in Holland and Zeeland the yards resounded to the shipwrights' hammers.

Mary again felt the galling restrictions to which, as a woman, she was doomed despite her courage and energy and her perspicacity in military matters. Her armies suffered from the lack of a good and recognized general. And most of her own entourage she found "worth less than nothing". Tirelessly she traveled round the Netherlands on horseback, hastened to Ghent when it seemed that a dangerous conspiracy threatened in that city, from there to the south for a personal inspection of the defenses, and on to Brussels to confer with her Council and her captains and to decide on the best distribution of troops. Trained and hardened by her hunting expeditions, she was able to stand the greatest fatigue, and mounting her horse before dawn she would drag her pitiable suite from army camp to war council, from war council to fortress.

During these exciting, dangerous months she was once more the only woman among councilors and soldiers. For the fate of

her young friend and hunting companion, Christina, had at last been settled in the manner most advantageous to the imperial policy: by a marriage to Duke Francis, heir to Lorraine, she was to bind that border province between France and Germany more closely to the Habsburg interests.

But Mary scarcely had time or peace to realize the loneliness Christina's marriage would mean to her. Her life at that moment was too hard and bitter to leave any room for feeling. While the approaching war made her its tool, internal tensions imposed upon her the hateful task of acting as leader of a political inquisition. All those denounced by her informers as spies in the service of the Duke of Gelre, as accepting bribes from France, or as speaking ill of the imperial regime, were put to the rack at Mary's command, there to scream out the plans of conspiracy, the names of the accomplices, and finally, when they had nothing more to reveal, to be drawn and quartered or mercifully beheaded. Was it true that Black Martin van Rossem, the much-feared general of Gelre's forces, had been seen at the horsemarket in Antwerp, where he was forging plans with the traitors of Ghent for an attack upon that city? Were Liège and Aix and Cologne really preparing a republican federation? Had the Frisian nobles actually promised the Duke of Gelre that they would cause an anti-Habsburg revolt to break out in their province? Had a plot been discovered in Luxembourg to hand over 's-Hertogenbosch, Antwerp, and Ghent to Martin van Rossem? And whence came the fortunes which the rebels of Ghent were scattering about together with promises that the King of France would restore all the city's privileges?

The government snatched at every thread which it felt must be a part of a whole network of conspiracies. In Antwerp, usually swarming with foreigners because of its trade, everyone who refused to swear allegiance to the government was driven from the city. Infringement of the regulation that every innkeeper must daily hand in the names of his guests was punished by death. Anyone who could give information about a plot, even though his own parents were involved, and concealed it, forfeited life and property. Before the war actually broke out hundreds of Mary's subjects had already lost their lives—upon the scaffold.

In the unbearable uncertainty of these months the dreaded invasion of the Netherlands came actually as a relief. Martin van

Rossem, who had for some time been roaming along the borders of Brabant and Limburg, struck the first blow, massacring peasants and burning farms in the region around 's-Hertogenbosch and the barony of Breda, and then moving on to Antwerp. That city had no garrison, and while the citizens hastily reinforced its dilapidated walls, Mary sent orders to the Prince of Orange at The Hague to come to its defense with his troops. She wrote him in detail what route he should use and directed ships to Bergen-op-Zoom so that he could avoid van Rossem and reach Antwerp by water.

But Orange considered this an unnecessary precaution. He took the overland route and was promptly betrayed. The troops that should have defended Antwerp were scattered by Gelre's forces and although Orange reached the city with a thousand foot-soldiers, this defeat in the heart of the Netherlands flung the systems of defense as well as the country's morale into confusion. "We would not find ourselves in this desperate situation if only my advice had been listened to", Mary complained to one of her generals.

There was no doubt, however, that the citizens of Antwerp would defend themselves to the last, and there was a fair chance that van Rossem might be surrounded by imperial troops which had been called up on all sides. After burning all the villages round the city, he now broke the siege and tried to cross the river Duffel. But there the bridge had been destroyed at the Regent's orders and the Gelderlandes had to stretch the bell-ropes of the church across the river in order to drag their soldiers to the other side in vats and barrels.

It appeared that van Rossem had now chosen Malines as his objective, but here the dikes were cut and a vast plain of water protected the town. In Brussels the defenses were being prepared with might and main, so that the Gelderlandes again preferred to plunder and burn unprotected villages on their move in the direction of Louvain, which could hardly be defended by its garrison of scarcely five hundred men. But a few symbolic shots from the walls proved sufficient to save Louvain. His scouts informed van Rossem that the enemy threatened to cut off the road to Luxembourg, where he wished to join French troops. He never attacked Louvain, but on their way to the southeast his plundering troops left a tragic trail of smoking farms and smouldering villages.

While Martin van Rossem was laying waste the Brabant countryside, in the south the French had achieved staggering successes in a rapid campaign, conquering the entire duchy of Luxembourg. But even here the struggle went against everyone's expectations when the still inexperienced young Duke of Orleans, who conducted the operations, decided without any apparent reason to join his father's army in Languedoc, where he evidently expected more amusement and opportunities to acquire glory. His voluntary withdrawal was turned into a rout by an attack from the imperial troops. News of this entirely unexpected event reached Mary practically at the same moment as the information that the great Danish fleet, which had been threatening Holland with invasion, had been scattered by storms. As soon as she knew that the north at least was safe, she hastened to Namur to remind her generals that as deputy of their commander-in-chief, the Emperor, she had the right to alter their plans if she wished. She longed to carry the war into the territory of the detested Duke of Gelre—to Jülich and Cleves and Gelre itself, which had refused to recognize the Habsburg's authority. Mary's orders for a campaign of retaliation in this region possessed a harshness that rivaled Black Martin's cruelty. Her generals were instructed to destroy and burn, refusing any offer of negotiations. The Regent regarded the Duke of Gelre as a traitor and a rebel, his accomplice van Rossem as a robber-chieftain, and neither had any claim to be treated as an honorable opponent.

The destroyed territory, was, however, too large to be successfully occupied, especially since the government, as so often before, was obliged by lack of money to dismiss part of its troops. Only the fact that a severe winter set in prevented immediate retaliations by Gelre.

So personal was Mary's hatred of Gelre that she was unable to rise above the temptation of an opportunity for revenge so small-minded that the duke of Aerschot, who had to carry it out, felt obliged to protest. Mary had ordered him to expel a niece of van Rossem, a nun in the convent of Sainte Waudru at Mons, and send her back to her own country. "Madame," Aerschot wrote, "is it not rather petty to take vengeance on this lady, who has lived in this convent since her early youth, like so many others? I do not believe that anything of this sort has ever happened before . . . I have been told that the lady in question is of irreproachable behavior and of excellent family, so that it surely

seems quite needless to be so severe with her. I am no friend of van Rossem, and have reason enough to hate him and to wish he were my prisoner; but, Madame, one should really try to remain reasonable."

But when van Rossem's niece presented a petition that she should be allowed to stay in her convent where, she declared, even French nuns were left in peace, Mary wrote in the margin of the document that a passport should be issued to her for returning to Gelre—"Fiat ung passeport pour la fille de Johan van Rossem pour se retirer vers Gueldres." She had not been open to her general's human advice, nor able to perceive that by allowing herself to be guided by hatred she was once again losing more than she would ever be able to regain.

The senseless, hopeless, endless war with France and Gelre went on. None of the parties was able to give definite direction to the course of a fight which consisted of sieges, sallies and retreats, attacks, plundering and burning, and the result of which was determined by wholly unpredictable factors—by treachery as well as by lack of money, by heroic courage as well as by cruelty, by corruption as well as by feudal loyalty.

This year of 1543 would indeed have been disastrous for the Netherlands had not Mary at last been able to convince the Emperor that he should come in person to their rescue. In July and August he marched with a large army through Germany toward the northwest, and so great was Mary's longing to have her brother at her side again, that she went to Limburg to meet him, although van Rossem's bands were again harassing the northern provinces. Like a caged tigress she traveled to and fro from village to village along the borders of her territory, restlessly looking toward the moment when she might hand over her heavy responsibility to the Emperor himself.¹

When at last she met him near Roermond at the beginning of September she was able to hail him as a conqueror and as the country's savior. For on his way from Speyer to the Netherlands he had captured Duren, the strongest fortress in his opponent's territory. The Emperor had not spared his powder, but had fired at least five hundred shots upon the city, the English ambassador reported to Henry VIII. Netherlands soldiers in the service of Gelre who had been found in the fortress received short shrift: they were strangled or drowned as traitors. The city was handed

over to the imperial troops as booty and the greater part of it went up in flames.

Duren's fate induced Jülich and Cleves to surrender. Everywhere the municipal authorities swore loyalty to Charles of Habsburg as Duke of Gelre, and within two weeks Mary of Hungary saw her enemy, William of Cleves, compelled to unconditional surrender. Gelre and Zutphen were added to the Habsburg Netherlands, now at last freed from those threats from the East of which France and Habsburg's other enemies had so often made use.

On the fate of Black Martin van Rossem, Charles and Mary agreed completely. His military talents were too valuable to lose. He was restored to favor, on condition that he would serve his Habsburg master with the same devotion he had shown to the Duke of Cleves. And Black Martin, being a shrewd man, swore loyalty to the Emperor and kept his word.

The Emperor's presence in the Netherlands may have freed Mary of direct responsibility for the conduct of the war, but her remaining duties were not noticeably lightened. Her brother, who on his arrival in the Netherlands suffered from a severe attack of gout—the ailment which had been troubling him more and more frequently in recent years—not only needed Mary's arm to support him, but also relied upon her as his most important counselor, his personal assistant, from whom he needed to conceal no thought, no reflection, no doubt or fear. Mary was more than the Emperor's first minister: she was his alter ego, his conscience, the tireless executor of their joint decisions, his deputy whenever stiffness and pain made him helpless, his solicitous visitor when circumstances permitted her to be in his neighborhood.

The likeness between sister and brother, which became more and more striking as they grew older, left no doubt of the link between them, nor of Mary's right to the place which many might have begrudged her had the family tie been less evident. For Charles and Mary had become like twins. The same inhuman weight of responsibility, the same royal isolation had impressed its stamp upon both their natures and bound them in the same fetters of disillusionment and melancholy.

The pitiless, loveless desert her life had become had robbed Mary's features of any womanliness. In its invariable frame of the white linen widow's cap, her face belied all the implications of

unchastity which French pamphleteers had flung about the world. Her pale, hard mask bore witness that she was used to being hated and feared, but not loved—that she was able to command and to despise, but had forgotten how to love. It occurred to no one in her entourage to regard her as a woman. Even the most loquacious ambassador found no occasion to describe her somber, unaltering nunlike dress; and once, at a reunion with her brother Ferdinand, when she came out of the church hand in hand with him, the fact was commented upon as an almost incredible sign of human feeling.²

Now that she knew the Emperor to be near, she concentrated with a passionate devotion upon her task of councilor and deputy. After his conquest of Gelre, Charles had decided to undertake in person the campaign against Francis I, whose war preparations along the southern border heralded a new invasion of the Netherlands. Having seen for herself to what a sick and helpless state his suffering could reduce him, Mary felt she ought to hold him back from this decision, "not only on account of the war danger," she wrote, "but for the sake of your health, in view of the bad condition in which Your Majesty seems to be at present."³

"I would have thought", Charles replied with a timid effort at teasing, "that you would not have given me such advice, since I know you as someone who in a case of this sort does not react in such a feminine manner as others of your sex, who are of a more delicate disposition. But I see that your sisterly love belies your outward appearance. To set you at rest I will assure you that I will undertake nothing that you yourself would not also do in my place, and even as a woman would not gladly undertake."

It is typical of Mary's attitude towards her brother that she did not see how well-meant his answer was, and even felt she should apologize for being meddlesome. In her next letter she revealed more of her feelings than she had ever dared to do before in writing. "The passionate love I bear you", she wrote, "fills me with the deepest concern, concern which, I admit, would be easier to bear if I had the opportunity to share the fate God has set for you. And if I had not confidence that the Lord will protect you, my anxiety would be unbearable; for when one is so filled with love, as I am towards you, one cannot always remain master of one's feelings. Therefore I beg you to forgive my weakness."

"I can only be grateful to you for what you wrote me on the occasion of my departure for the front," Charles replied. "If you

took my answer differently, you did not grasp my meaning. I asked the courier whether you did not laugh when you read my letter. For I laughed when I wrote it and made the allusion to what you would do if you were in my place . . ."

Relieved by this human note, Mary hastened to reply that the Emperor was right and that she would like to be present unseen if there should be a battle—unseen, not because she would suffer from the anxiety and fear other women would feel at such a moment, but out of longing to share unobserved His Majesty's fate.

This difficult, hesitant contact with the only person she could permit herself to be fond of, this impossibility of finding a lighter tone, of answering a laugh with a laugh, is indicative of the rigidity which had grown in Mary since her youth. Her royal isolation seemed to have robbed her of any possibility of intimacy, even with those of equal birth. Her voice sounds natural only when, in brusque familiarity, she gives her recalcitrant generals a piece of her mind. She is well able to put into words indignation, scorn, a cutting mockery; and irony is her sharpest weapon. But sentiment and affection seem to render her powerless—and powerlessness is always and in every respect a torture to her, even in relation to the Emperor, whose superiority she could quite naturally take for granted.

Through this wall of her impotence Mary was still able to prove her devotion to her brother in a thousand actions. It was as though his presence increased tenfold her capacity for work. While Charles was successfully pursuing the autumn campaign against France on the southern borders, Mary began to prepare by diplomacy the great plans for the following year, when Charles wished to end French opposition for good by an overwhelming invasion to be carried out jointly with Henry VIII. Through Chapuys, the imperial ambassador in London, she had since 1541 been working for favorable political and economic relations with England, and it was now her task to hold Henry to his promise of landing in France in June 1544 and attacking Francis I in Picardy, and to arrange transport and provisions for the invading English troops. After the withdrawal of the French armies the Emperor was able to leave the Netherlands for five months, while his sister toiled away at her difficult task, executing the combined functions of minister of foreign affairs and of war, of justice and of supplies, of internal affairs and, most difficult of

all, of finance. But she knew the Emperor, busy with problems in Germany, to be close by, and the preparation of a military attack which he would come to lead himself seemed easy to her in comparison with her former hopeless task of organizing the defenses of a country threatened on all sides, without means and without sufficient cooperation. In the months preceding the great summer campaign Mary worked as never before. Every morning before sunrise her discussions began, with her councilors and with the ambassadors of Henry VIII, who kept her informed of their master's demands. Almost daily her couriers crossed the Channel with dispatches for Chapuys, her chancery worked day and night to get through the correspondence with generals and quartermasters, government representatives in every corner of the country, suppliers of war materials, paymasters, captains, transport officers and the countless multitude of anonymous "good personages" who acted as spies for the imperial government inside the country and abroad.

When Charles V invaded the territory of his French enemy near Metz in the summer of 1544, with Paris as his objective, the scales of the European balance undoubtedly tipped to the Habsburg side. The conquest of St. Dizier, where Charles' general, Prince René of Orange, lost his life, was the first of a whole series of victories and at the same time meant the beginning of negotiations with the French. This time also it was Queen Éléonore of France who made the first efforts at bringing about peace. According to the tested method, she sent her sister a present of some fine hunting falcons and wrote her that King Francis was desirous of peace if the Emperor would be prepared to end the struggle in which both parties were likely to be destroyed.⁴

Henry VIII, who had begun his campaign in France too late and failed to coordinate it with the Emperor's, agreed to a separate peace between France and Habsburg, convinced that Charles would then be sure to press Francis I to meet the English demands. Thus the Peace of Crespy came about in September 1544, settling the main points of difference between Habsburg and France. The treaty contained a provision that the second son of Francis I, the Duke of Orleans, would marry either Charles V's eldest daughter, the Infanta Maria, who would then bring all the former Burgundian provinces to the marriage, or the second daughter of Charles' brother Ferdinand, who in that

case would receive the duchy of Milan as dowry. If the first plan, to which Francis had refused his consent four years earlier, should be feasible, the young couple would become regents of the Netherlands during Charles' life, to enjoy full sovereignty after his death. The choice between the two possibilities was left to the Emperor, who would make his decision within four months.

Here was Mary's opportunity for freedom. She did not hesitate to use pressure on her brother by reminding him of his promise to relieve her of her office immediately upon his return to the Netherlands.⁵

But alas, it was once more apparent that to Charles V the private wishes of his sister had as little importance as those of his subjects. At that moment he wanted peace with France so that his hands would be free to deal with the German Protestants and the Turks. He accordingly accepted conditions of peace in which no one in the Netherlands saw any advantage. What had been gained by the destruction and misery of the war? Why no reparations for the incalculable damage the French had inflicted on the Low Countries? Thus complained the Netherlanders, high and low, and thus also felt Mary, who knew better than her brother what her provinces had suffered.⁶ Through continued taxation on all the necessities of life the Netherlands had become the most expensive country in the world, as a Venetian ambassador expressed it. Everywhere one saw untended, uncultivated fields, ruined or deserted farms, and in the cities neglected houses, closed shops, beggars in all church porches, at all corners of streets and squares. Mary's practiced ear again distinguished the familiar sound of approaching revolt and she knew what awaited her the moment the Emperor left his lands. She dreaded the future, which could bring her only opposition and unrest, hatred and revolt in an impoverished, devastated country, where thousands of dismissed German and Spanish soldiers, who had come in with the imperial army, attacked and robbed country and city folk alike.

While the people suffered from the aftermath of war, the court at Brussels plunged into a series of festivities to celebrate a peace that had brought satisfaction neither to France nor to the Netherlands, and against which the French Dauphin himself had officially protested. The Duke of Orleans, the only person, it was said in both countries, who would gain something from the Treaty of Crespy, came to the Netherlands in the company

of his stepmother, Queen Éléonore, and his father's mistress, the inevitable Duchesse d'Étampes, to present himself to the Emperor as the prospective bridegroom of one of the Habsburg princesses. Mary of Hungary went to meet the French party at Mons, anxious to greet her sister Éléonore and to make the acquaintance of the young man who would succeed her if the Emperor should consider him an acceptable husband for his daughter.

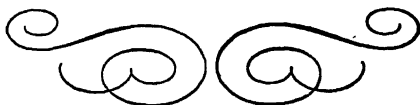
But Charles had hardly been in earnest about the plan of marrying his daughter to a Frenchman. His only son Philip had poor health, and the possibility must be taken into account that the Infanta Maria might some day succeed her father in Spain. If she married Orleans, he would be entitled to consider himself the ruler of the whole Spanish-Habsburg area. In comparison with such a possibility, the loss of Milan, which Orleans would acquire if he married Charles's Austrian niece, was no doubt a little less risky. And, moreover, the Emperor had no intention of deciding. He was not the kind of man to let his promises mislead him into deeds that might have undesirable results. Orleans was received in the Netherlands with great magnificence, and his stepmother and his father's mistress were most convincingly overwhelmed with gifts. But he was obliged to return to France without a promise or even a hint of how the Emperor would choose. Mary of Hungary had no need to doubt that in any case she would not be relieved by the Duke of Orleans and her niece Maria. And it must have become clear to her that the Emperor intended to bind her to himself more firmly than ever when he gave her for life the city and lands of Binche, where she had often lived, and shortly thereafter, before his departure for Germany in the spring of 1546, added to this royal gift a second, the city and manor of Turnhout, in recognition of the great services she had performed for him throughout her regency and especially during the war of 1542. It was not like Charles, however, frankly to refuse her repeated request to be relieved. He now promised her in writing that he would let her go six months after his return to Spain. This period was necessary, he added, to enable his son and successor, Prince Philip, to come to the Netherlands and take over the regency from his aunt.⁷

What else could Mary do but gratefully accept her brother's promise, though probably with a heavy heart? She knew the conditions in the European arena too well not to understand that the

proviso turned the promise into a dead letter. The Emperor left for Germany to resume his efforts to solve the religious and political problems awaiting him there. The Turks were still threatening Central Europe. The French dauphin would probably soon succeed his mortally ill father, Francis I, and a resumption of the French fight with Habsburg could be expected. All these facts made it unlikely that the Emperor would be able to return to Spain within a short time and send his son to the Netherlands. In the spring of 1546 when, aged and weakened after two years of almost uninterrupted illness, her brother took his leave of her, Mary of Hungary, with her gift for recognizing reality, must have seen that her release, which for a moment had seemed so near, was now postponed to a dark and distant future.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gilded Cage



... et ne suis femme qui mette le coeur à telles choses pour en avoir grand regret à les perdre, comme choses transitoires et muables, de quoi l'on doit user quand on l'a, et s'en passer quand on ne l'a pas. Voilà sur ma foy, tout le regret que j'en ay.

... and I am not a woman who puts her heart into such things and then greatly regrets losing them, like transitory and mutable objects, which one should use when one has them and do without when one has not. That upon my faith is all the regret I feel about it.

Mary to Granvelle, July 1554

THE victory over Gelre, the peace with France, at last brought Mary some years of a slightly quieter existence. Although her high office continued to make the same heavy demands upon her, although the political situation in Europe certainly did not alter to the advantage of Habsburg and the Emperor continually involved her in his problems, still she now had the opportunity to make a more personal life for herself. The cage in which she had allowed herself to be locked up fifteen years before remained closed. But after 1546 it took on a certain gilded brilliance. Charles must have known which instincts he was taking advantage of when he bestowed on his sister the seignorial rights of Binche and Turnhout with all their revenues. Mary of Hungary possessed the same love of splendor and magnificence as her Burgundian ancestors. Extravagance and luxury were in her blood and now that her income was considerably increased by Charles's gifts she could

indulge that most costly of all passions—to which her aunt Margaret had given rein in the beautiful Church of Brou—the royal passion for building. Early in 1546, even before the Emperor had begun his journey to Germany, she went to Binche to give instructions on the spot for the building and furnishing of her palace.

She could not devote herself to her own interests undisturbed, however. In September 1545 the French-Habsburg relationship had been robbed of all semblance of stability through the sudden death of the Duke of Orleans, whose marriage to a Habsburg princess was to have guaranteed peace between the two dynasties. The situation had become still more precarious through Charles' conviction that the revolt of the Protestants in Germany should at all cost be broken, even if he would have to undertake a full-fledged military campaign to accomplish this purpose. His instructions to Mary accordingly included preparations for offense as well as defense, and as she visited the southern fortresses she knew so well, she organized the provincial cavalry, ostensibly as a measure against French attack but really in order to be able to give her brother assistance, should the course of affairs in Germany lead him into war with the Protestants.

Though she went to Binche once again in her capacity of minister of war, this time she found distraction from her military task in the plans for the palace which the South-Netherlands architect and sculptor Jacques Dubroeucq was drawing up for her.¹ On her writing table, ground plans of fortifications and price lists of powder, lead, and provisions lay beside samples of damask and gold brocade, of marble and mosaic. In addition to the truly royal palace within the walls of Binche, Dubroeucq was also to build her a country house where Mary and her guests would be able to enjoy themselves on the days she hoped to spend hunting in that region.

Mary commissioned works of art from various famous artists. Jan Vermeyen of Beverwijk designed a series of twelve tapestries immortalizing Charles' conquest of Tunis.² Carried out in silk, gold thread, and the finest wool by one of the best-known Brussels weavers, their wealth of color was destined to warm with its beauty a number of the rooms of Mary's palace.

While Michiel van Coxie prepared designs for murals and chimney pieces, Mary drew up the most fantastic layout for the park that was one day to be the city's glory. One might

have expected from her a taste for simple and natural things, but Mary expressed herself like a true Renaissance ruler in a passion for bizarre garden ornaments, which gave her the same satisfaction as she had derived in her Hungarian days from her extravagant table decorations. From amongst a wealth of rare flowers and shrubs there shone forth a white marble Ceres twenty-four feet high. A little further on the astonished visitor stumbled upon Parnassus itself, carried out in mother of pearl, where nine white marble muses reposed beside a fountain dedicated to them. A porphyry basin on which Dubroeuq and his staff of sculptors had worked for more than a year gleamed in the moonlight, its surface mirroring the glow from torches by the light of which Mary's guests supped at a table of colored mosaic.

But this was not all. Between marble colonnades marvelous flowers of embossed silver bloomed, which could sway in the wind. From rockeries of porphyry and marble, upon which coral bushes grew, sprang scented fountains. Even the sky had to be artificial: out of it lightning, thunder, and rain could be produced at will. The park of Binche was to serve, like the palace, as a museum of curiosities where those who had the privilege of being received there could wander about marveling at so much beauty and skillful artistry.

The new mistress of Binche spared no expense in perfecting her property. "May God grant you prosperity and health", the Duke of Aerschot wrote her in May 1546. "And especially prosperity concerning your building at Binche. For it would not surprise me if Your Majesty sometimes had a headache from it, and if you were to speak the truth, I believe that it has already cost you many headaches."

The plans for Binche and for the collections she hoped to house there must nevertheless have provided a perfect form of relaxation for Mary, in contrast to the cares of office under which she had so long been buried. How pleasant for her to correspond with her brother Ferdinand about the Roman coins and medals he had collected for her in Venice, Hungary, Rome, even Constantinople, and which he sent her in a specially constructed box. Ferdinand shared Mary's interest in curiosities and delighted in sending her some fossilized fish found in a silver mine and given to him by the counts of Mansfelt. "I think these pieces most remarkable," wrote Ferdinand,⁸ "not to say astounding."

The basis of Mary's collection was formed by the objets d'art and curiosities she had inherited from her aunt Margaret of Austria. These, together with a large part of the famous Burgundian library, to which Margaret had contributed so many valuable items, were still kept in the palace at Malines. Mary's close contacts with her brother's ambassadors and councilors enabled her to keep informed about whatever was published in Europe in the realm of letters and learning, and to her political correspondence with the imperial representative at the French Court she added orders for a newly issued *Description of the World* in three parts, and for the works of Cicero, which she wished to receive as they came off the press.⁴

Charles's departure for Germany temporarily put an end to Mary's sojourn at Binche. Though he had assured her that he would leave nothing undone to settle his quarrels with the Protestant princes by peaceful methods, only two months later he informed her of the failure of his efforts and of his decision, in consultation with their brother Ferdinand, to resort to force. If he failed to do this, Charles wrote, Catholicism in Germany would be doomed to disappear, with the result that a similar development would occur in the Netherlands. "By turning away from the Catholic faith," Charles wrote, "people will at the same time turn away from loyalty and obedience to their ruler—which I would not see happen for anything in the world, nor wish to bring about."

The problem the Emperor faced could not have been more simply stated. It was far more the threat to his own authority that Charles feared than a change in religious tenets, and the possibility that the imperial authority might suffer would provide the best argument for convincing Mary of the necessity of a campaign in Germany. She redoubled her military and political activities, and did her utmost to procure funds for the imperial campaign. She made use of the services of a Florentine financier, Gasparo Ducci, who enjoyed the reputation of being an unreliable intriguer guided only by his own lust for money.⁵ Ducci knew through and through the secrets of the Antwerp exchange, the winding paths of finance that led to the vaults of the big bankers, and Mary did not hesitate for a moment to use this astute, courteous guide in the labyrinth of high finance, who not only helped her with loans but also made himself hated by

the people of the Netherlands by teaching the Regent various new methods of raising taxes.⁶

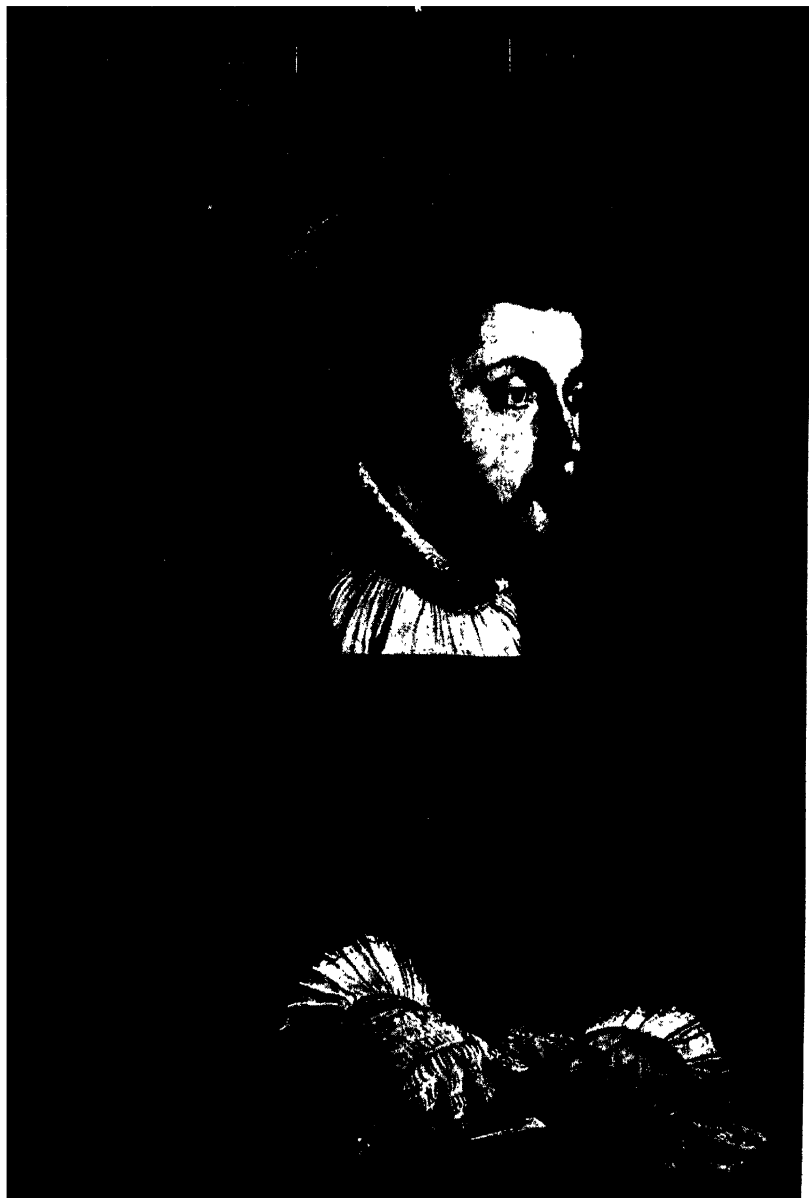
During that summer of 1546 Charles had badly needed his sister's help. In the beginning of 1547, however, a double blow befell the Protestant princes by the death, only eight weeks apart, of both Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England. Each in his own way—the first through his dynastic and personal hatred, the second through his incalculable ambition—had influenced the fate of the House of Habsburg, and both of them, alternately or together, had been prepared, though from different motives, to make common cause with the German Protestants.

These deaths were like a writing on the wall. While Mary ordered special Masses and processions in the Netherlands to pray for the blessing of Heaven on the imperial arms, Charles succeeded in joining up with the armies of his brother Ferdinand. The defeat of the Protestant allies at Mühlberg in Saxony resulted in Charles being able to regard himself more than ever before as the ruler of a defeated Germany upon which he could impose his will even in matters of religion.

Charles's victory over his German subjects was not long in affecting the life of his sister, ever ready to adapt her own existence to the demands of the Habsburg policy of the moment. As soon as her brother exchanged his coat of mail and plumed helmet for the velvet tabbard and beret, Mary found upon her writing table documents of more peaceful nature in place of dispatches of war, and in her long hours on horseback she could give her mind to diplomatic instead of military problems.

She knew what preoccupied the Emperor, whose power at that moment seemed inviolable. She knew his plans for the future of the Habsburg House, which would set his stamp upon centuries of European history. And she accepted as inevitable the fact that all Charles' efforts, his thoughts and actions, aimed at laying a firm foundation for the future power of that slight, pale, not quite healthy youth, Prince Philip of Spain, his only son, whom he seemed to love more than any other human being.

Mary knew her Spanish nephew only from what the Emperor was willing to confide to her, from what the imperial entourage, by chance or intent, gave away, from what her councilors or her spies had learned. She knew that in Spain he was praised for his almost fanatical piety, his retired, well-regulated life, his



Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin

Emperor Charles V, by Christoph Amberger.



Musée du Louvre, Pa

"Dîner champêtre." From *Les Chasses de Maximilien*, series of drawings by Bernard van Orley.

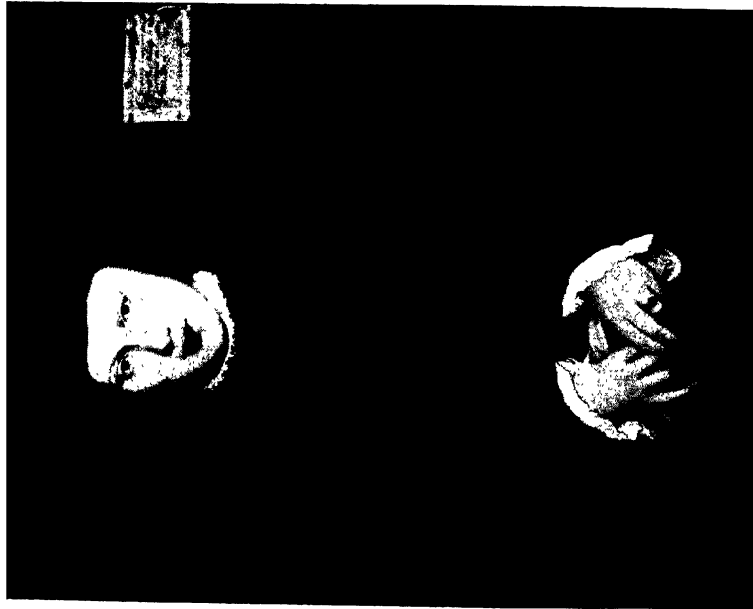
View of the Palace of the Dukes of Brabant in Brussels. From *Les Chasses de Maximilien*, series of drawings by Bernard van Orley.

Musée du Louvre, Pa

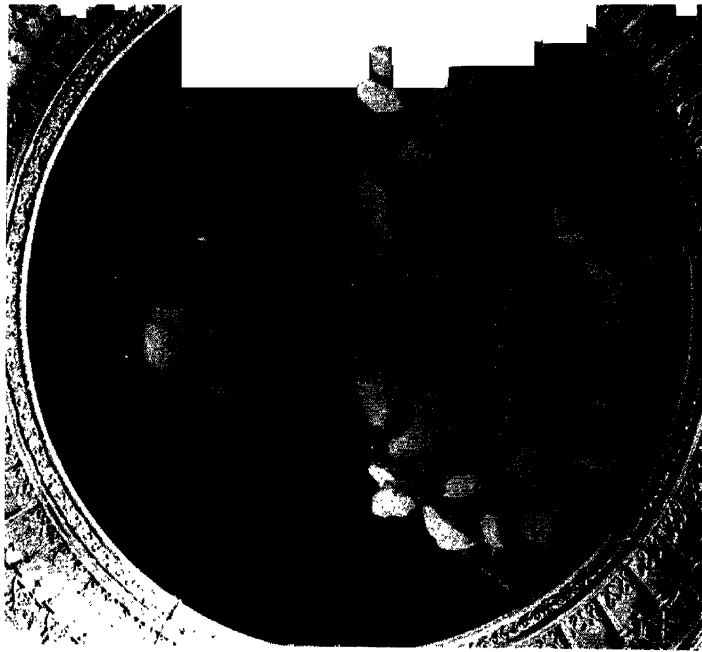




Mary of Hungary about 1530, by The Master of the Regent Mary.
Present owner unknown.



National Gallery, London
 Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan, by Hans Holbein
 (detail)



Collections of H. M. Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, The F
 Éléonore of Habsburg, Queen of France. Attributed to Joos van Cl

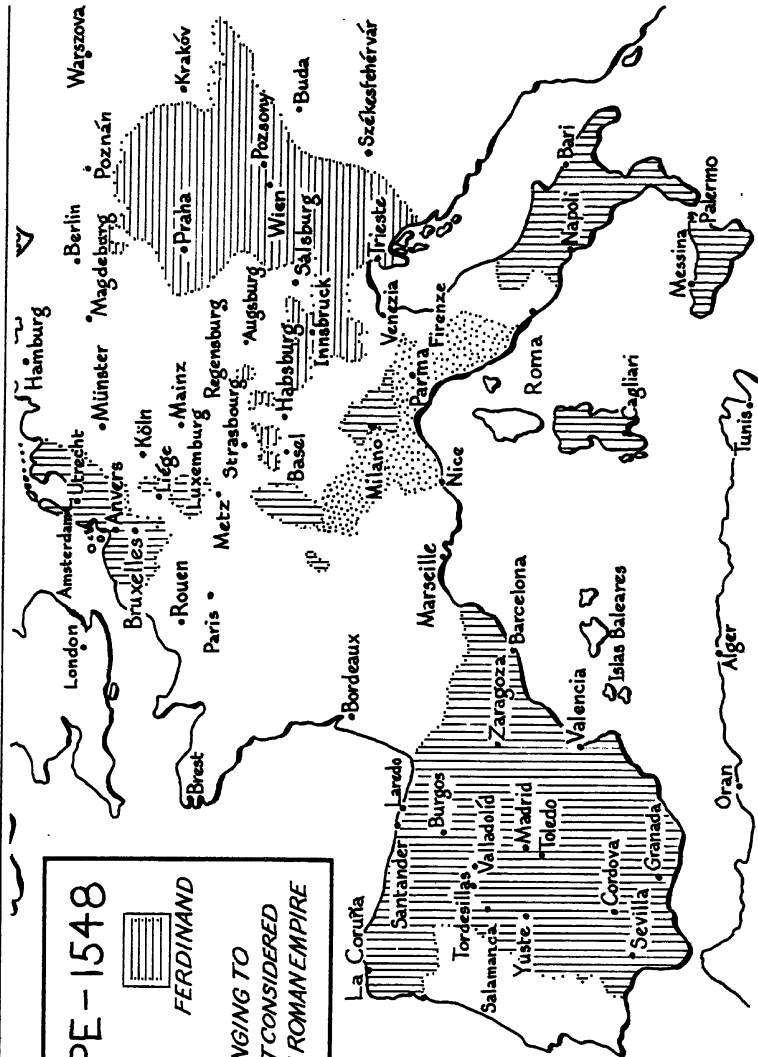
EUROPE - 1548



CHARLES V FERDINAND



BELONGING TO
NEITHER BUT CONSIDERED
PART OF HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE





Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Bust of Philip II about 1556, by Pompeo Leoni. Enameled silver head; bust of later date.



Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Mary of Hungary. Bust by Leone Leoni.

Low Countries, 1555.
at Abdication of Charles V



preference for peaceful occupations and serious discussions. She had been told of the haughty self-assurance with which he kept everyone at a distance; of the elegance with which he dressed, causing his small slight figure to attract all eyes. She knew that he strongly resembled his father, the Emperor, through his underhung lower jaw, the transparent pallor of his complexion and the somewhat prominent blue eyes that seemed to ward off what they saw. Netherlands nobles who had met him had expressed to the Regent their amazement that a scion of the sport-loving Habsburgs cared nothing for horses and hounds and preferred staying in bed late to starting out at crack of dawn with a falcon on his wrist. It had not escaped Mary that they spoke of him as of a stranger.

Those who surrounded the Emperor had often doubted whether this weak, pale prince who shunned any physical effort would be up to the task under which his father had so prematurely aged. Habsburg policy had taken into account the possibility that the Emperor might survive his only son, in which case his eldest daughter—and the husband who should be chosen for her—would inherit the Spanish kingdoms and the Netherlands. But Philip of Spain grew up, and showed ever more clearly that he was not averse to the idea of taking the place of his world-dominating father.

It was to smooth Philip's path that Charles, in closest consultation with his sister Mary, drew up two plans, to the realization of which the next years of both their lives were to be devoted. These concerned the relationship of the Habsburg Netherlands to the German Empire, and the future of the Empire itself, where Charles' brother Ferdinand bore the title of King of the Romans—successor to the Emperor—a title of which, after Charles' death and Ferdinand's accession to the throne, the next bearer would have to be appointed.

In recent years the Estates of the German Empire had several times attempted to restore to some extent the former link between the Netherlands and the Empire, practically lost under the Burgundian rulers, especially with a view to the very necessary financial support these provinces could give in the fight against the Turks. In the beginning of his reign Charles had been inclined to meet the wish of the Estates to raise a contribution from his Burgundian lands. But the Regent Margaret had, as

always, defended the independence of the Low Countries and had been able to convince her nephew that the Netherlands Provincial Estates would not dream of putting their hands into their pockets in the interests of a war so far from their own borders.

When in 1542 the German Estates had again asked for payment by the Netherlands of part of the Empire's expenditure, Mary of Hungary thought she could reconcile the wishes of the Empire and the aversion of the Netherlands by drafting plans for a union in which the Emperor and the Imperial Estates pledged themselves to take the Low Countries under their protection, with as *quid pro quo* a contribution to the Empire's expenses, which, however, involved no political dependence. Charles V found Mary's plan so important that he requested her to attend the next Reichstag in order to work it out together with his advisers.

In November 1547 Mary of Hungary traveled to Augsburg to meet her two brothers and all those who at the moment enjoyed power and prestige in the Holy Roman Empire. She was received with all the marks of honor to which her position as sister and intimate councilor of the Emperor entitled her. In the almost eighteen years of her regency she had indeed succeeded in silencing the somewhat mocking criticism with which the whole of Europe had once greeted her appointment as Regent of the Netherlands. Then she had been but a young and presumably quite inexperienced woman, of whom Habsburg's enemies said that she would show more interest in having a good time than in affairs of state. Now, however, her name had a ring, not of festivities and dance music, but of the clatter of arms, a steely ring of authoritarian command. For those who knew her as "*la Reine*," this word had lost its velvet glow, its feminine radiance, and had assumed a sharp and terrifying accent. The friends as well as the countless enemies of Charles V who had come together in Augsburg knew that they had everything to fear and nothing to hope from the Regent of the Netherlands. Anyone who expected to achieve something to his own advantage at the cost of the Habsburg interests at this Reichstag meeting, saw her presence as a bad augury, a warning that he should go about his business with more than usual caution. It seemed impossible that any secret intrigue, any whispered word or slyly given sign could escape her attention.

In Augsburg Mary found, in addition to the Emperor, her brother Ferdinand, King of the Romans, and Ferdinand's eldest son, Archduke "Max", who had inherited the frank, sunny, chivalrous character of his great-grandfather, Emperor Maximilian, and who was now expected to marry his cousin Maria, the Emperor's eldest daughter. There was Ferdinand's daughter, the Duchess of Bavaria, just as merry and warm-hearted as her brother Max, and there was Dorothea of Denmark, wife of the Elector Palatine, who still lived up to her reputation for gaiety. Christina of Denmark had also come to Augsburg to meet her sister, her uncles and aunt and cousins. Having lived for years as "the Widow of Milan" and in 1541 married the heir to the throne of Lorraine, Christina was again wearing the widow's weeds in which Holbein had once painted her at the request of Henry VIII. When the young duke, after a reign of scarcely a year, had been laid beside his father in the ducal crypt at Nancy in the summer of 1545, Christina had accepted the regency for her small son, and now ruled in Lorraine with great tact and intelligence.

The Emperor seldom took part in the festivities which Archduke Max organized with typical Austrian generosity. He remained in his own apartments. In the impressive portrait which Titian painted at this time, Charles V, not yet forty-eight, appears as a tired, suspicious old man, seated as if in constant pain, and dressed in the black fur-bordered velvet of the law, unrelieved by any jewels.

The great Venetian painter had been summoned to Augsburg to make use of the rare opportunity offered by the presence of so many members of the Habsburg family. No artist was as highly regarded at the imperial court as Titian, and at Augsburg he painted not only Charles V, Ferdinand and Mary, but also Ferdinand's daughter, the Duchess of Bavaria, and a large number of important personages and courtiers. It is quite possible that Mary herself commissioned the various royal portraits later found in the inventory of her collections. She shared Charles's admiration for Titian's work, and herself kept the portrait he painted of her in Augsburg "with her cap on and in her everyday dress", as the inventory puts it. The original was destroyed in Spain during a fire in the Prado, but copies have been preserved in various collections and they show the Regent of the Netherlands in her traditional costume in which the fashion of the passing

years caused only slight changes. Her serious, severe face with the large, intelligent eyes and noble, masculine features, reflects a force of character, a purposeful energy, which one does not see in the portrait of her brother, the Emperor, painted at the same time. As in the pictures painted in her youth, Mary looks away from the observer. But she seems to be less cold and haughty than in her earlier portraits. Was this due to the warm atmosphere of these days of family celebrations at the Augsburg Reichstag, to the fact of being together with the few equals with whom she could have a human relationship? Or was it the eye of the Venetian master which saw in the nunlike austerity of his sitter a humanity, however severe, which Mary of Hungary perhaps did possess? Titian painted a deeply serious, very regal woman of striking vigor and intelligence, with fascinating warm eyes in a handsome face no longer young. A woman of whose real nature so little has reached us that a single document like this Augsburg portrait is sufficient to mitigate the judgment of history.

While the principal personages held their meetings and their entourage dined and danced, while Titian painted and the citizens of Augsburg earned money from the thousands of guests filling inns and private houses, Mary of Hungary's great plan for a union between the Netherlands and the German Empire was worked out and approved. It was not considered necessary to consult the provinces on these decisions, nor did the certainty that the Estates would not accept them out of hand cause any hesitation. The Regent was instructed to inform her subjects of the agreement as of a *fait accompli*.

She went home to a people which had not grieved at her absence and could hardly expect any particular improvement from her return. At that moment, it is true, the Netherlands had no need to fear a repetition of the disasters of war, since there was peace with France. But many dreaded their own government more than any foreign enemy. The series of cruel measures by which, at her brother's command, she had sought to root out Protestantism in its various forms, had only cultivated more hatred of the ruling house without diminishing in the least the number of adherents to the new doctrine. Frequently it was the very persons known for their Christian charity and their true piety who were driven to the stake and the scaffold by the

Habsburg inquisitors. Sometimes sentences had to be carried out in secret because a public execution might start a revolt. Especially after the activities of the Anabaptists and the armed revolt of the German Protestant rulers, the Reformation had more and more taken on a political aspect. Imperial edicts, following each other year in and year out, had even declared reading the Scriptures in any language but Latin a crime punishable by death, had weakened the ties between the ruling house and the people, though not the craving of the faithful for the consolation of the Word of God. And though Mary of Hungary had occasionally exercised clemency by allowing a condemned person to die by the sword instead of by slow burning, still it was to the Regent as head of the government that the odium of the edicts came to be attached. The defeat of the Protestants at Mühlberg augured no good for the adherents of the Gospel in the Low Countries. People felt sure that the Regent's return would be followed by a fresh stream of decrees and sentences. While Mary of Hungary rode towards the north, hunting as she went, in many Netherlands families the heartbreaking decision was taken to flee to a foreign country rather than risk renewed exposure to anxiety and the danger of death. Now that there was no point in escaping to Germany, many sought asylum in England, where they brought the assets of their industry and professional skill to such cities as Norwich and Colchester. What the English cities gained through the arrival of craftsmen and merchants who had left their own country as "Lutheran fugitives" was lost to the cities of the Netherlands, where empty houses and abandoned possessions were sold for the benefit of the government, and where day laborers went without bread because their employers had chosen freedom in exile rather than the spiritual slavery that was being imposed on their country.

Yet, how to compel this people to accept the spiritual prison of the edicts, how to urge it to agree to the subsidies the government was as always obliged to demand, was not the most difficult of the problems that would require solving in the years to come. The Emperor and his sister were agreed that a visit of Prince Philip of Spain to the Netherlands, over which he would some day rule, was a first essential. Even before Mary left Augsburg Charles had concluded a detailed "instruction", for the use of his son, with which he sent the Duke of Alva to Spain to accompany the prince to the Netherlands via Italy and Germany.

The object of this instruction was to acquaint Philip with the political lessons his father had drawn from his long reign, and the document clearly bears the marks of having been drawn up in consultation with the Regent Mary, whose experiences in the Netherlands formed the basis of Charles' advice concerning those countries. He explained to his son that only a firm union between the various Netherlands provinces could safeguard them against the danger which threatened not only himself but the entire Habsburg power from France. As the Queen of Hungary seemed determined to resign her regency, the Emperor considered in his instruction the possibility of handing it over to Philip's eldest sister and her husband, Archduke Maximilian. It would be better, however, if the Regent could be persuaded to carry on, as it would be difficult to replace her special gifts. Apparently Charles still hoped to keep her in office, for in view of the tensions to which the Netherlands were a prey, her departure at this critical moment would indeed mean disaster for the succession.

A few months after his sister, Charles V also returned from Augsburg to the Netherlands. As usual the Estates General were immediately convoked, and the Emperor informed them of the coming of his son and heir. Preparations were made to give his "joyous entry" such splendor and lustre that the Netherlands, carried away by the brilliance of the welcome, would forget that the Crown Prince was a foreigner who did not speak their language, who despised their habits and their way of life, found their celebrations boring, their dishes distasteful.

In March 1549 the highest nobleman of the Netherlands, the Duke of Aerschot, attended by a select company, journeyed far into the German Empire to meet the prospective ruler of the Low Countries. The Regent herself went to meet him at Wavre, accompanying him to the Castle of Tervuren, where Christina of Lorraine, especially arrived for the festivities, received him.

After the midday meal at Tervuren, everyone proceeded in a glittering cavalcade of no less than 1600 plumed horses to the grassy plain nearby, where the Regent regaled her nephew with a battle between two squadrons of cavalry, one dressed all in green, under command of the Prince of Piedmont, the other in white under command of the Count of Roeulx, one of Mary's most renowned generals. The thunder of cannon boomed out above the thud of hundreds of hooves when the two parties began

the attack, and so vigorous was the shock, so deceptively genuine the mêlée, that no one was astonished to see, at the end of the fight and after the withdrawal of the armies, two soldiers left behind who had paid with their lives for the royal entertainment.

On this same first of April Philip made his official entry into his future capital. Seated upon a battle charger which made even the sophisticated citizens of Brussels utter cries of admiration, and clad in satin and velvet of a dazzling scarlet, preceded by his personal banner, Philip rode into Brussels, in a posture of inhuman tautness, between a cardinal and a prince of the blood and followed by a train of countless dignitaries of church and state.

The Easter celebrations briefly interrupted the series of festivities. Then early in May another royal tournament took place on the Great Square, in which Prince Philip himself took part. Philip received on this occasion, though scarcely deservedly, a valuable ruby as prize in an episode called "the ladies' lance". Not for him the sword-prize, nor the lance-prize, which were won by two daredevil Netherlands nobles. But the Emperor rejoiced that his son had appeared in armor and had at least made an attempt to show interest in the nobility's national sport.

For Philip's lack of enthusiasm at what was offered him in Brussels began to be noticed. At the most opulent and boisterous festivities he remained a cold and somewhat bored spectator and the nobles whose business it was to familiarize him with the Netherlands customs in sport, games, and entertainment, found disappointingly little response in their stiff and haughty pupil.

Only once during these festive weeks did the population of Brussels see the Crown Prince laugh, and it was a laugh of cruel pleasure. The famous Brussels Procession, which neither the Emperor nor the Regent ever failed to attend if they could be in the city, had been planned this year with greater extravagance and imagination than ever. For four hours the whole clergy of Brussels, followed by the brilliantly arrayed guilds with their sumptuous floats, moved past the town hall, from which the imperial family watched the spectacle. The most successful number, about which Brussels was to talk for many months, was a float upon which a bear stood playing an organ. But what an organ! In twenty narrow cages twenty miserable cats were locked up, their tails tied to the keys of the organ upon which the bear struck wild cords. Every key he pressed down jerked

the tail of one of the caged victims, who by turns or all together protested against this treatment in the greatest variety of keys. Round this cacophonous instrument children danced disguised as bears, wolves, monkeys, deer and other animals, and when the float with its shrieking and screaming cats drove past the royal stand, the onlookers saw to their satisfaction that the Prince of Spain had at last found cause for amusement and had burst out laughing.

Mary of Hungary, who was present at all these festivities, was meanwhile charged by her brother with the organization of the political side of Philip's visit to the Netherlands. She had to persuade the Provincial Estates to approve two measures which Charles considered necessary. He wished that Philip should already at this time take the oath as future ruler of all his hereditary lands and receive the oath of loyalty from the Estates. In addition he demanded that the Estates should agree to accept the so-called "Pragmatic Sanction", by which the succession would be settled uniformly in all the provinces and all existing differences in this field would be wiped out. The result was to be that all the Netherlands would under all circumstances have one lord and master and would form a more coherent whole than before.

After the Grand Council of Malines and the Council of Brabant had approved these measures and the provinces had with some hesitation also accepted them, the Emperor decided to accompany his son in person on his inaugural journey through the country. Mary joined her brother and nephew on this exhausting trip, the program of which included almost daily some new joyous entry. But among all the festivities organized in honor of Philip, perhaps the most brilliant was the reception she prepared for him in her residence at Binche.

The entertainments Mary had organized for her guests would have done honor to her Burgundian great-grandfather, Charles the Bold. Once again she took the opportunity of enjoying a sight which fascinated her more than any other and at which she never could be present in real life: a scene of battle. It began with knights on foot, who went for each other in the courtyard of the palace with pike, sword, and short spear, with two-handed sword and battle-axe. Then followed a dinner in the upper hall of the palace, at which Mary gave expression to the very special significance of this gathering by the striking way in which she seated her guests. Contrary to court custom, the

Emperor and his son, with the two queens, sat quite alone at a separate table, in a privacy that must have been very welcome to the Crown Prince but which did not fail to make an unpleasant impression upon the high nobility of the Netherlands, accustomed as they were to being treated by members of the imperial family as "mon cousin".

The climax of Mary's reception, however, took place at her hunting castle, Mariemont, outside Binche. After a splendid mid-day meal she conducted her guests out of doors, where a castle had been constructed of wooden panels so cleverly painted that they could not be distinguished from real stone. With its twelve-foot-high bastions it rose behind a deep moat, and three knights defended it against any knight errant who might approach its walls in search of adventure. For inside was the enchanted knight Norabroc and the enchanted sword. All those who did not succeed in defeating the three guardians were kept prisoner in the castle until the Fortunate Knight should win the sword and set them free.

The Dukes of Ahrenberg, Hoogstraten, and Hoorne were the guardians of the mysterious castle and many were the opponents they prevented from reaching the enchanted sword. But when the Prince of Spain appeared, he proved stronger than any of them. He it was who won the sword, which in addition to its secret power had a value of four thousand gold crowns. Arrived at the castle gate, the Prince defeated three more knights who barred the entrance—and after that shattered with his magic sword a lance of glass that hung above the gate. With this blow the enchantment was broken and Philip could free his predecessors and lead forth the knight Norabroc.

To be the principal character in an exciting game and the undefeated hero who stepped out of the arena with a sword of peerless beauty as reward, must have flattered Philip's self-esteem, though at the cost of that of his voluntarily defeated opponents. Two days later the Netherlands nobles, however, had their chance when they enacted before the imperial family a siege in which the no-longer-enchanted wooden castle was fought over by large numbers of soldiers, mounted and on foot, and even with artillery, and this with so much enthusiasm that at the end many wounded were left lying around its ruins.

During the journey through the Netherlands, Mary had ample opportunity to form an opinion of her nephew's character and

of the manner in which his prospective subjects reacted to his personality. During these summer months of 1549 Mary must have developed that dislike of her nephew which later she was unable to disguise, and which turned the last years of her difficult regency into a severe trial.

She noticed with critical eyes the contrast between the Crown Prince's stiff manner and the engaging good nature of his father, the Emperor. Scarcely able to speak any French, and totally unacquainted with Flemish and Dutch, Philip preferred silence and left it to others to answer the speeches of welcome addressed to him. Wherever he appeared he left the same impression. He was thought cold and haughty, and the manner in which he paid no attention whatever to his Netherlands entourage was taken as an insult not only by the courtiers themselves but by the thousands of onlookers at the inaugural ceremonies. Nothing of all this escaped the Regent, who accompanied her nephew to North Brabant, Holland, and Zeeland, to Utrecht, Zutphen, and Gelderland. Everywhere she found the same reactions: the journey which should have been a triumph for the House of Habsburg only created a wall of antipathy between the Crown Prince and the people whom he could so easily have won by a different bearing. Mary must have been aware that her own impressions coincided with those of her Netherlands councilors and courtiers, as well as with those of her subjects. She, too, was hurt by Philip's behavior, which offended her loyal love for the brother who would be superseded by this proud and dour Spaniard.

Personal jealousy and disappointment, injured dynastic pride, envy of what she herself as his father's servant had conquered and defended and which was now claimed as his own good right by this arrogant young Habsburg—presumably Mary was able to conceal all these feelings behind the mask of official pleasure appropriate to the occasion. But she must have realized with fear and trembling that what her brother, with all his personal popularity in the Netherlands, had scarcely been able to retain, would not long be safe in the hands of a foreigner like Philip.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Shattered Might



Car je vous puis certiffier que je n'en puis plus, si je ne creive. Et soyez certaine que je n'ay jamais tant sentie ni ne sent chose que le roy de France mort ne me n'ayt fait ne ce que cestuy cy me vouldroyt faire . . . comme j'ay fait et fait veoyr les termes de quoy le roy notre frère use envers moy.

For I can assure you that I can do no more without collapsing. And be sure that I have never so much felt nor feel anything that the dead King of France did to me or that this one would like to do as I have felt and feel in regard to the manner in which the king our brother deals with me.

Charles V to Mary,
December 16, 1550

ON the last day of May 1550 the Emperor in the company of his son left Brussels to return to Augsburg. When the group of travelers had reached the Great Market, Charles reined in his horse and spoke a few words of farewell to the people of the city, who had come running from streets and alleys to see the imperial cavalcade pass. The people loved the Emperor for such a gesture. Prince Philip, on horseback beside his father, stared straight ahead.

Mary of Hungary had taken leave of her brother and her nephew in the palace. When she saw them go—the aged, sick man whom she admired and loved, the young prince whose aspirations she had learned to fear—she must have been anxious about the future. She knew that her brother, as if under the spell of Philip's ambition, would leave nothing undone to realize it,

and she must have understood that she personally could expect little good from this giving-in of age to youth. In Augsburg the Emperor was to meet his brother Ferdinand and confront him with Philip's wish one day to wear the imperial crown. Ferdinand, who had been King of the Romans, successor designate and deputy to the Emperor all these years, expected, in accordance with previous agreements, that his son, Archduke Max, would succeed him as King of the Romans as soon as he himself had become Emperor. But now the popular Max was to make way for the arrogant young Spaniard, and the original idea that the Spanish branch of Augsburg should rule in Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands, and the Austrian branch in Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, and the German Empire, would have to be given up. Charles had discovered that only the fact that he was Emperor had been able to rescue the Netherlands for his House when France had sought to conquer them. His sister Mary's experiences merely strengthened him in the conviction that Philip would be able to hold them only as Emperor, or prospective Emperor, of the Holy Roman Empire. To Philip, however, the imperial crown was not a means of keeping the Netherlands, but an objective in itself, the highest satisfaction of his ambition, the only crown he considered truly worthy of himself.

Mary must have been aware that Charles' new plans would arouse serious opposition from Ferdinand and Maximilian as well as from the German Electors, whose right to elect the Emperor they totally overlooked. But she could not have guessed that Charles would prove so helpless against Ferdinand that he would call upon her to support his campaign. During his stay in Augsburg, in the midst of painful discussions and stormy meetings, Charles suffered a severe blow through the sudden death of his first minister, Chancellor Granvelle, who had occupied this confidential post for twenty years and who by his courtesy and moderation had always exercised a conciliatory influence. The loss of this councilor, especially in the circumstances of the moment, caused an alarming emptiness around Charles, which made him long for the support and comfort of Mary's presence. The new chancellor, Granvelle's son, the young Bishop of Arras, also called upon the Regent in the conviction that it would be possible for her to find a solution acceptable to both parties.

The letters urging Mary to join the family council were so pressing that she scarcely dared grant herself time for the prep-

arations necessary to give her journey the indispensable royal cachet. With the smallest possible escort of only a few hardened horsemen, she hastened to Augsburg in the last week of August. She found her brothers in an irritated and stubborn mood which made any reasonable discussion impossible. Charles had counted upon Ferdinand being willing at least to listen to his sister as to an unprejudiced councilor who had only the interest of the dynasty as a whole in mind. But Ferdinand was convinced that Mary wished primarily to serve the Emperor and therefore chose the side of her Spanish nephew as prospective ruler over the Netherlands. Even after Mary's strong plea Ferdinand still refused to accept Charles' proposal, and the only thing she achieved was Ferdinand's promise to summon his son Maximilian from Spain for further discussions. In order not to force the issue Mary returned to the Netherlands as soon as this concession had been won. Accompanied by only the best riders from her already selected escort, she covered in barely thirteen days a distance for which experienced travelers considered seventeen hardly sufficient.

It was difficult for Mary to concentrate her attention on the affairs of the Netherlands in the following weeks. Both the Emperor and young Granvelle kept her informed of the course of the Augsburg discussions, and the latter, who rightly saw in the Queen of Hungary a supporter of his recently begun career as the Emperor's right-hand man, told her with great frankness his opinion of the weak aspects of Charles's position. He emphasized the point that Ferdinand could count on the support of the German princes, who would not hear of Philip's candidature for the imperial crown and who publicly announced that they would never again vote for a Spaniard. They took Philip's taciturn manner and reserve for ignorance, he wrote,¹ and were not influenced by the efforts the Prince sometimes made to be charming and communicative.

Moreover Philip paid no more attention to his German entourage than he had previously to his Netherlands courtiers. Granvelle reported with concern that he was inseparable from the Dowager Duchess of Lorraine, who had come to Augsburg once again, and had no eyes for anyone else. The Bishop would do his very best to see that Christina did not stay longer than the two weeks the Queen of Hungary had granted her, though he feared that his insistence on her departure would not much

please the "lovers", as he called them. Mary evidently had serious objections to this amorous adventure that kept distracting Philip's attention from the dynastic interests at stake and she considered herself entitled to obstruct it as far as possible.

By November it had become clear to her that the Augsburg conversations were about to end in catastrophe. The letters from Charles, who under the most serious reverses usually expressed himself with stoic resignation, were now full of bitter despair and disappointment and of passionate indignation at what he called the misbehavior of Ferdinand and his son Maximilian. For unfortunately he had come to suspect his brother and nephew of being in league with the German Estates, from whom they wished to extract money for defending their lands against the Turks. Again and again, when he tried to convince his brother of the incorrectness of his conduct, or pointed out to him the necessity for a new settlement of the succession in the Empire, it came to hard words and bitter reproaches between them. After all he had done for them, after all the advantages they had obtained from him, the Emperor complained, he now had to put up with this kind of treatment. Never had he been so worried by the misdeeds of the late King of France, or the evil intentions of his successor, as now by the behavior of his own brother. And what hurt him most deeply was that at their meetings Ferdinand showed no sign of regret or shame at his lies and intrigues.

Now that the good understanding with his brother was so thoroughly destroyed, Charles saw but one way out: Mary must come to Augsburg again to try and bring Ferdinand and Maximilian to reason, or, if that did not succeed, at least to give Charles himself some advice and consolation. To prevent the Empire's funds being used for Ferdinand's benefit, Mary should make the journey immediately, for it was all too clear that Ferdinand intended to ask the support of the Estates at the first favorable opportunity. If he could be told that the Queen of Hungary was on her way, he might be prepared to postpone his request until she had been able to give her advice.

Thus it appeared to the Emperor that not only Philip's future but also his own position in the Empire would be greatly endangered by Ferdinand's efforts, unless Mary hastened to give her wise mediation. Never had her responsibility been so heavy, never had she been so directly told that she, and she alone, possessed the authority and the strength of mind to save the

House of Habsburg from disaster. What the Emperor himself could not achieve, was now expected of her—and Mary did not shrink before this superhuman task which required more statesmanship, patience, and persuasiveness than her imperial brother with all his councilors together could provide.

So once more she undertook, in the dark days before Christmas, the mortally fatiguing ride through a cold and gloomy countryside, accompanied only by the Bishop of Cambrai and three undaunted ladies of her household. The consciousness that Charles needed her help and longed for her arrival as never before, the feeling that the future of the Habsburg dynasty lay in her hands, gave her the strength to surpass her own record. Mounting her horse long before the winter dawn, granting herself no time for proper meals, and riding on by torchlight through ice-cold or snow-wet winter nights, Mary finished her heroic ride from Binche to Augsburg at the end of the twelfth day. Late in the evening of New Year's Day 1551 she dismounted in front of the imperial residence in Augsburg.

If Mary was ever rewarded for her devotion to her brother, it was in the days after her arrival, when she saw the Emperor, whom she found older and sicker than ever, revive by her presence. On Twelfth Night Charles showed himself in public for the first time in many weeks, dined with his brother and sister, his son and Ferdinand's sons, Maximilian and Ferdinand, and evidently enjoyed the concert by Ferdinand's famous choir which accompanied the banquet.

It did not take Mary long to master every detail of the state of affairs. It must have been immediately clear to her that the Emperor stood totally alone against irreconcilable enemies, who were defending the last remnants of German independence by supporting Ferdinand in his refusal to accept Philip as prospective King of the Romans. In proposing that Archduke Max should join the discussions, Ferdinand had played his hand with great skill. There was no better propaganda for the Austrian Habsburgs than the striking difference between the two candidates for the imperial crown. Beside the rigid, suspicious reserve which Philip tried in vain to conceal behind an artificial *bonhomie*, Archduke Max's winning natural charm was recognized even by the traditional enemies of Habsburg. While Philip could approach anyone who spoke no Spanish with only a few words of hesitant Latin, Max made himself popular by joking in their

own tongues with Englishmen, Italians, and Germans, Spaniards, Frenchmen, and Hungarians. When on his father's advice Philip changed his magnificent stiff Spanish clothes for the looser German costume, and drank too heavily of the German wines, he was considered at best ridiculous, but certainly not sympathetic. His accomplishments on the jousting field won him only a reputation for timidity and caution, while Archduke Max could afford to look on without being accused of laziness or lack of sportsmanship.

Mary must have realized that it would be useless to try to persuade the German princes to change their minds. What motives she brought forward in the endless conferences with the recalcitrant Ferdinand which went on behind the scenes, is not known. Those interested in the developments could only draw their own conclusions when rumor went the rounds that the Queen of Hungary had left Ferdinand's apartments with a pale face and flashing eyes. As the weeks passed, however, the foreign ambassadors, lying in wait, as it were, to announce to their governments the definite break in the Habsburg dynasty, were able to observe that the Queen was showing some signs of relief and occasionally appeared less depressed. After two months of exhausting daily conferences, Mary managed to convince her brother that this most painful situation could not go on without doing irreparable damage to the reputation of their House. A solution was finally found whereby Ferdinand could give in without actually losing anything, while Charles and Philip appeared to have got what they wanted. Mary herself, however, could scarcely have doubted for a moment that the agreement resulting from her heroic efforts, which was signed in the Emperor's apartment on March 9, 1551, had no real content whatever, but was one of those impressive-sounding sham documents that are so useful for hiding a defeat. The brothers and their sons agreed that Philip would become King of the Romans when Ferdinand should succeed Charles as German Emperor and would then immediately exercise a certain part of the imperial power. Archduke Max was to take over Philip's title as soon as Philip was elected Emperor, and on signing the agreement Max made a verbal declaration, drawn up by Mary herself, that he would put nothing in the way of Philip's candidature, but would on the contrary support it. Philip on his side signed a written promise

that, once Emperor, he would leave the entire government of the German Empire in Maximilian's hands whenever he was obliged to be absent. The Austrian and Spanish branches of Habsburg were to assist each other in defending their respective lands, and in order to strengthen the bond between them even further, Philip of Spain should marry one of his Austrian cousins to counterbalance Maximilian's marriage to his Spanish cousin, the Infanta Maria.

This it was which Mary had attained with so much difficulty. The solemn document, however, made no mention of the fact that the Electors would have to agree to the arrangement: after all it was they who would determine the final choice of who should be Emperor. And the certainty that they would never agree to elect Philip of Spain King of the Romans must have been the deciding factor in Ferdinand's concession, which he knew to be no more than an empty phrase.

Mary too was well aware that she was leaving Augsburg anything but victorious. When in the first week of April the English ambassador to the imperial court was received in a farewell audience, he reported to his government that Her Majesty appeared very much depressed, although she had managed to smile two or three times.²

In the last weeks of her stay at Augsburg Mary felt more than ever the hopelessness of her position. It seems probable that the ardor with which she flung herself into the championship of Philip's cause was rooted in the hope that, if she succeeded, the Emperor would reward her with the greatest favor he could bestow upon her: at last to release her from her function of regent.

With the same tenacity she had shown towards Ferdinand, Mary urged Charles to consent to her wish. But he had seen for himself that for the time being Philip's regency in the Netherlands would be an impossibility and this meant that Mary's presence was still essential. The hypocrisy which had allowed him to sign the worthless agreement with Ferdinand now enabled him to request his sister to continue in office for a short, oh, a very short time longer. He intended to send Philip to Spain for not more than a few months, he explained, and as soon as he could leave Germany to return to Spain himself, he would ask Philip to meet him in Italy, where he could give him full in-

structions about the regency in the Netherlands so that he could release Mary. All this, he assured her, would happen in the very near future, and he begged his sister to assist him until then.

When Mary traveled back to the Netherlands towards the end of April 1551, her chance of freedom gone once more, the future must have appeared to her a heavier burden than ever, which she would be able less and less to share with others. For her brother Charles was a worn-out, broken man who sought solitude, and her nephew Philip, locked in his own solitude of haughtiness, was the last partner she would have chosen.

On her return to the Netherlands the Regent was immediately inundated by most disturbing reports. It was clear that Henry II, more obsessed with hatred against the Habsburgs than his father, Francis I, had ever been, had but one aim: the total destruction of the man who in his youth had kept him prisoner in Spain. His whole being was aflame with this hatred, which gave him no rest but, like an unquenchable thirst, prevented him from thinking of anything else. In order to destroy the Habsburg dynasty any means were acceptable, even support of Protestant Germany, even a league with the Turks, though they purposed the annihilation of Christian Europe. Henry's agents were working in Italy, in the Netherlands, wherever resistance to the House of Austria could be stimulated by gifts or promises. While his ambassadors were still talking of friendship and peace, Henry was mobilizing an army on the southern border of the Netherlands, inciting the French merchant fleet to piracy and privateering against Netherlands ships, and preparing for a campaign in Germany in which, together with the German enemies of Habsburg, he would fling himself upon his opponent, "to drive him out of the Empire, to pursue him on land and sea, till his last breath, till his total annihilation." Thus he had written in a letter which the Emperor had managed to intercept. Charles laughed at such exaggerated self-reliance. But Mary received daily reports from the French border and remembered the hatred which in Augsburg she had observed around the Emperor. She did not mock at Henry of France as Charles permitted himself to do. She armed the Netherlands.

While once more her days and nights were spent in councils of war with her generals, purchasing equipment, requisitioning

horses and wagons, ordering defenses and fortifications to be built, she also constructed a plan of defense and offense as widespread as that of her French enemy. She wrote Granvelle that she expected the French attack in the following spring. It seemed to her that the Emperor should remain in Germany at all cost since owing to French intrigue his departure would immediately lead to an outburst in the Empire. The more Protestant princes he could get out of Germany, the better, even in highly paid offices. Now that Habsburg had so many enemies they were compelled to feign friendship on all sides until conditions should become more favorable.

The Habsburg position could be strengthened considerably, Mary declared, if it were possible by kind words or by force to have some English harbor at their disposal. That would prevent the French fleet from revictualing in England and from threatening the Netherlands coast. If it proved necessary, it would even be possible to conquer the whole of England, impoverished and divided as that country was, with the support their Catholic niece, Mary Tudor, would receive from countless Catholics now oppressed by the ruling Protestant clique. For such an undertaking only one thing was essential: money.

In her memorandum Mary even dared to touch upon that especially delicate point, the succession in the German Empire. Would it not be sensible if the Emperor showed more confidence in Ferdinand's sons, and at least for the present did not mention his plans for the succession, but rather acted as though he loved his son-in-law Max just as much as his own son Philip? In view of the fact that the plans in Philip's favor could not be carried out as yet, the Emperor would risk nothing by showing some affection; and with the French once subdued, and Philip having gained the necessary reputation, the Emperor could after all do as he liked with the Empire and no one in all Germany would dare to oppose his wishes. Meanwhile the Germans would rejoice if they heard no more of Philip's candidature for the imperial crown, and they would be the more inclined to support His Majesty. If things went against them, Mary wrote, she considered the Empire lost and themselves to be in great danger—"si les affaires nous tombent au ranvers, je tiens l'empire perdu et nous en grand dangier." Everything depended on the outcome of this war, which they must conduct rapidly and with

all strength, for they could not hold out long against so many enemies. And with that aim in mind anything they put up with or condoned could only be of profit to them.

This memorandum of Mary's to the Emperor's first minister was an undiluted example of the pure power politics Machiavelli had described in his *Prince*, and which the rulers of his time applied so well. Such a system required foresight, clouded by no qualm of conscience, the power of quick decision, the courage to stake everything. Mary of Hungary possessed all these qualities and the fact that at this moment she deemed it necessary to lay before her brother a theoretical plan of campaign shows how much she feared that the Emperor was no longer mentally or physically capable of employing the methods his enemies would use against him. At fifty-one Charles V was a man broken by years of physical suffering and no longer in possession of that suppleness of mind and body which had made him in his younger years a great sportsman, a great general, a great fighter in the diplomatic field. What Mary of Hungary saw in this threatening summer of 1551, the hopelessness of the Habsburgs' situation in the Empire and in the Netherlands, the iron ring of hatred and opposition that again threatened to close about them, did not penetrate with the same merciless sharpness to Charles's exhausted mind. Her brother hesitated, vacillated, lost time.

Mary's defense measures along the coast and the southern boundaries of her provinces were practically completed when war between France and Habsburg was actually declared at the end of September 1551. The city of Antwerp stood surety for a loan of 300,000 pounds, which enabled the Regent to pay her troops until the Emperor should have met her urgent request to put money from Spain at her disposal. And in expectation of an attack in the south she took measures against the "fifth column" which threatened the country from inside. All Frenchmen who happened to be in the Netherlands were ordered to leave. Inn-keepers were again obliged to report their guests daily to the authorities, so that spies and traitors might be arrested.

Meanwhile Mary's prediction of a revolt in the German Empire was realized. Duke Maurice of Saxony, against whom she had warned her brother, together with a number of German princes, concluded an alliance with Henry II of France "in defense of their religion and to protest against the practices of their enemy the Emperor, who was trying to reduce their beloved fatherland to a

bestial, unbearable, permanent slavery, as he had already done in Spain and elsewhere."

When the Emperor became aware of the seriousness of this plot, he decided on the course his sister had most urgently advised against: to return to the Netherlands. But Mary could not place at his disposal the troops he demanded for this purpose, and she pressed him again most emphatically to join up with Ferdinand's army.

The refusal of his sister, the only person upon whom he thought he could rely, to extend a helping hand to him, proved more than Charles could endure. His reply to Mary showed bitter and angry disappointment. Did she not know that he could expect no help from their brother Ferdinand, and did she perhaps suggest that he should withdraw into the mountains and defend himself there with a handful of peasants?

Charles was in the fortified mountain city of Innsbruck with only a small military escort when the bad news reached him that Maurice of Saxony had marched into the imperial city of Augsburg at the head of a triumphant Protestant army. Mary had been right to warn him. The blow had fallen. The Empire seemed lost. And the fact that he himself was in the greatest danger could no longer be doubted. Tortured by the fever and pain of his chronic malady, able to move only with difficulty, without troops to protect him or money to recruit them, believing himself betrayed by Ferdinand, abandoned by Mary, Charles saw but one way to save himself from death or shameful imprisonment: flight. Flight in the direction of the Netherlands, which had been prepared for battle by his sister and where at least his life would be safe. Flight at dead of night. The furtively opened bedroom-door, the waiting horses, the agonizing ride through the darkness in the company of a handful of followers. He tried to accomplish it. But after that one night on horseback it became clear that his sick body was not equal to the effort, and he was compelled to return, after his barber had hastened ahead to Innsbruck to camouflage the humiliating fiasco. Not until three weeks later did he write to Mary of his desperate effort to reach the Netherlands, which he begged her not to mention, unless she thought it might dispose the Netherlands to gratitude to hear how he had risked his life in their service.

But upon this voluntary adventure an involuntary flight was soon to follow. Maurice of Saxony moved south, and only a few

hours before his troops occupied Innsbruck, Charles fled the city again, if possible in a still more tragic manner. For now a severe attack of gout prevented him even from mounting a horse, and by the smoky light of straw torches his litter had to be borne over narrow mountain paths and along steep precipices, until he found temporary safety in the town of Villach. Safety, because after all he was the Emperor upon whom no one dared lay hands. When Maurice of Saxony was urged by his allies to pursue the Emperor and take him prisoner, he had replied: "I have as yet no cage in which to shut up such a bird." Charles was left free—but the entire German Empire had become a cage to him.

Even before she learned of the annihilating blows which had fallen upon her brother, Mary had received disastrous news from the French-Netherlands front. Metz, Toul, and Verdun were occupied by the French, the dukedom of Lorraine fell victim to them. The minor Duke of Lorraine was taken to France, the Duchess-Regent Christina banished from the country by Henry II. Mary's first reaction was to concentrate the troops at her disposal and to challenge the French army to an encounter. But an order from the Emperor to limit herself to defense checked this first initiative. And when she realized the full significance of the Emperor's impotence, Mary too saw salvation only in tactics which ran totally counter to her own character, and which robbed her of that infallible strategic accuracy which in earlier conflicts had earned her the admiration of her generals. In vain her commanders waited for the order: Take the offensive! with which she had so often incited them to action. They managed on various occasions to spread fear and disturbance in the French border areas, but never received permission to extend their raids into a real war of aggression. Their orders were to wait, to avoid more serious action, not to venture beyond their own borders. It was clear that the Habsburg campaign was being influenced from headquarters in Brussels by fear and uncertainty instead of by Mary's usual resolution and contempt of death.

Yet even now she did not lack these military qualities. Once again she did "more than the possible". Again she spent days and nights on horseback, visited troops and fortifications, conferred with her grumbling, hotheaded commanders, whom she managed to inspire to the most difficult of virtues, patience, and tried to fill with her own boundless devotion to the Emperor. Returning to Brussels or Antwerp, she would meet the agents of the

big business houses to persuade them to give advances on the funds available in Spain which the Emperor hesitated to release. In these meetings, in which she dealt with the cleverest bankers of Europe, she discovered that Habsburg credit stood lower than ever before.³ Only the Fuggers, in whose books the Emperor was already down for inestimable sums, were willing to advance a paltry 300,000 ducats, provided they received a bond from the Queen of Hungary, a second from His Majesty the Emperor, and a third from the Prince of Spain. If His Majesty would just agree to send to the Netherlands the gold which came regularly by the shipload to Spain from the New World, the Antwerp bankers promised to put money at her disposal cheaply and would not need to charge her the current exorbitant rate of interest.

The Spanish gold would have to be fetched by a fleet that could in case of need protect it against French warships. But it could not sail before Mary had sent a special ambassador to assure Edward VI that all these proud ships of war would not endanger England but were only equipped to defend the Netherlands against those who had so often threatened both his country and hers.⁴ This served as an introduction to a subsequent request she addressed to the English king on her own initiative: a request for actual help against the French, in accordance with the treaties concluded with Edward's father Henry VIII, which Henry had in fact carried out. A request for help, when only the previous autumn Mary had thought it possible to invade and conquer England—which she was still quite prepared to do as soon as the Spanish gold had been unloaded in the Netherlands! The Netherlands, where she felt almost as isolated and threatened as her brother did in Germany. Where from the reports of her spies an alarming collusion between the countless dissatisfied and revolutionary elements and the foreign enemies of Habsburg daily became clearer to her. Where none of her generals possessed the qualities of a truly great commander, where no one could lead the troops to victory, now that the Emperor was not available and might perhaps never be so again.

Meanwhile Charles realized that he had to choose between two evils: to be destroyed by French and Germans together, or to yield to the German demands in order afterwards to defeat the French with German help.

It was indeed high time. On August 1, 1552, again at the last

moment, Mary warned her brother that Catholic as well as Protestant German rulers had met in Heidelberg, and that they even planned to depose the Emperor. Thus Charles saw himself forced to enter into negotiations in which his brother Ferdinand acted as mediator. The treaty of Passau, which he signed in the middle of August, put an end to his chances of establishing absolute authority in Germany. He had to grant freedom of worship to the Protestants until a new Reichstag should have taken definite decisions. In return the rebellious rulers dismissed their troops, receiving the assurance that the Emperor would no longer look upon them as rebels. The treaty restored to the Emperor his freedom of movement in the empire, the possibility of raising troops, the chance to take a hand in the war with France.

Thus Charles undertook another campaign, not only to save the Netherlands but above all to take revenge on the French king. Seldom during the long feud between France and Habsburg had the conflict been conducted on both sides with such merciless cruelty, and never yet had the Emperor let himself be misled by hatred to such a great strategic mistake as he committed now, at the close of his military career. Despite the warnings of experienced Netherlands generals like the Count of Roeulx, who were convinced that the city could not be taken, Charles decided to besiege Metz before winter set in, to paralyze Henry II's further activity by a spectacular success and thereafter to end the war in the following spring upon French soil.

But Charles was no longer in a condition to inspire his troops to deeds of courage as in his earlier days; he was not even able to keep pace with the advance of his army and was obliged to leave the encirclement of Metz to the Duke of Alva. But though the Emperor was weak his army was strong. Mary had done her utmost to provide food, horses, artillery, and implements of siege. "Madame," wrote Boussu from the camp before Metz, "I believe that since the day of his birth His Majesty has never had so magnificent an army as now, nor so great, nor made up of such excellent soldiers. They are the bravest troops I myself have ever seen in all the armies I have been with." But all this was to prove in vain.

It began with rain, cold, lack of food for the besiegers. Hunger and sickness reduced the famous imperial army within a few weeks to an undisciplined rabble. "Madame," Boussu wrote at

the end of the same letter to the Regent, "I cannot help telling Your Majesty that I do not believe that there ever was such disorder in an army since the beginning of the world. Within a radius of four miles everything is plundered and robbed, and even the food-carriers have continually been robbed of everything they had with them, even to their horses and wagons. It would not surprise me if our camp had to be broken up because of lack of food supplies."

When towards the middle of November Charles was sufficiently recovered to inspect personally the trenches around Metz, he instantly saw what irremediable mistakes had been made. For a few weeks longer he tried to attack the city from another side. But the season was too far advanced. The besiegers suffered hideous privations and died in thousands of hunger and cold, exhaustion and disease. It was to last until Christmas, however, before Charles's obstinacy yielded to the hard facts and he admitted "that one cannot fight against the winter season." The siege of Metz was lifted.

The news of this crushing defeat caused a real panic in the Netherlands. No one would believe that the Emperor, whose stubborn persistence was all too well known, could ever have called off such an important siege. If the imperial camp before Metz had really been broken up, it must mean that the Emperor himself was dead. If not, where was he? Why had no one seen him if he was still alive? The Emperor was dead. It was a rumor so persistent, and so dangerous, that swift measures were considered necessary to suppress it, to prevent the nervous tension all over the Netherlands from some fatal outburst. But Charles, who was in Luxembourg, was at that moment too sick to show himself in public, was in fact in danger of his life. Never yet had the English ambassador, admitted to his presence for a few moments, seen him so deadly pale and so thin, with such lifeless eyes. Never yet had he seen the Emperor's entourage such a prey to despair, Granvelle so sad, the Duke of Alva so downhearted.⁵ Not until six weeks after he had withdrawn from Metz was Charles at last able to make his entry into Brussels. But what the people of Brussels managed to see was not likely to reassure them about the future. Lying in a litter, too weak to sit upright, pale and emaciated, too exhausted to react to the cheering of the crowd, the Emperor was carried into his capital. The figure they had glimpsed between the curtains of the litter

was indeed the Emperor Charles. But it might just as well have been a corpse.

Even his entry into Brussels, which Charles had been able to accomplish only with the utmost exertion, proved insufficient to put an end to the rumor of his death. Weeks, even months passed without the Emperor leaving his apartment, without anyone being admitted to his presence. Only the Queen of Hungary and Granvelle could be seen entering the antechamber, from which they would not emerge for hours.⁶ Were they conferring with the Emperor? Or did they only go in to make it seem that the Emperor still busied himself with government affairs, that he was still in a condition to discuss matters . . . that he was still alive?

Those who could have answered these questions remained silent. Those who did not know, however, murmured to each other their surmises and speculations about the future, filling the hollow palace of the dukes of Brabant with the shudder of uncertainty. Who ruled the Netherlands? the foreign ambassadors asked themselves, unable to supply their governments with reliable information. Who was determining policy, whom should one try to keep as a friend? Was the English ambassador right when he advised his government to give horses as presents not only to the Queen of Hungary but also to the Bishop of Arras? It was said that the Queen was indeed ruling and the Emperor had let the ambassador know that he could talk with her as with himself, now that he was too sick to receive visitors.⁷ Nevertheless, Granvelle had a hand in everything, the ambassador reported, if not at the beginning, then at least in the middle or at the end . . . Granvelle was a mighty man. He never, never spoke the truth. One must have Granvelle as a friend . . .

What would happen if the Emperor was really dead or about to die, the courtiers, the foreigners, the servants of the palace whispered among themselves. Would the Queen, whose ability and loyalty were above all doubt, continue to govern, even though Prince Philip had taken the oath? Was it true that the people were planning to call upon Archduke Max, the Austrian, to be their ruler instead of Philip the Spaniard, who would surely rule through his detested insolent fellow-countrymen? That this was by no means out of the question, it was said in Brussels, was proved by the remark of one of the imperial councilors who had complained about the treacherous behavior of the Emperor's

brother and nephew, who today would be unable to call a square foot of land their own if the Emperor had not been there to defend their country, and who now were intriguing to obtain possession of the Netherlands.⁸ If all this was indeed true, the English ambassador wrote home on May 5, 1553, would it not be preferable not to bother any longer with those who were still said to represent the Emperor, the Queen and Granvelle, but rather to seek a rapprochement with Ferdinand and Maximilian? It seemed quite certain that the Emperor was dead, or dying, or totally irresponsible. He himself, wrote the ambassador, had been able to observe something very striking which seemed to confirm this assumption. He had been present when the Queen of Hungary received the Bishop of Norwich in audience, and during the conversation Her Majesty had suddenly laughed, but at a moment when there was not the smallest occasion for doing so. It was a deliberate, artificial laugh, evidently intended to give those present, who could not follow the conversation, the impression that she had reason for gaiety.⁹ Under the circumstances, the ambassador felt, the reverse conclusion was obvious . . .

Mary of Hungary was the only person besides Granvelle and Charles' secretary Eraso who knew that the Emperor was still alive, though she was as little in doubt as they were about the seriousness of his malady. Since Charles' flight from Innsbruck she had lived on the reports of his personal physician, which contained every detail of his condition. But now that she could visit her brother every day, watching him grow paler and thinner, scarcely able to speak any longer, she continually feared that he might not be alive at her next visit. And it seemed to her impossible that he should ever again bear the burdens of state, which now rested entirely upon her own shoulders.

Despite her sorrow over the only person she really loved, Mary worked with grim energy at the salvation of the Netherlands. To replace the disbanded remains of the once so proud army which had perished at Metz, new troops were recruited and the indomitable Count of Roeulx proposed to the Regent, although he was suffering from an incurable wound and had to be carried in a litter, to give the French the greatest fright of their lives by starting a new campaign before the end of the winter. Though it was April before the State Council had been convinced that aggression would now be the best defense, it still appeared that Roeulx's vigorous optimism had made an im-

pression upon the despondent councilors. And as always it was the Regent's spirit that was the first to revive. During the summer months the Netherlands troops managed to conquer both the key positions of Théroutanne and Hesdin, and there was a further easing of tension now that there need at least be no fear of a French attack upon the heart of the Netherlands. Rooulx, to whom the government owed this success, died before it had been achieved. His death robbed Mary of her ablest and most devoted general and placed before her the problem of who should be nominated commander-in-chief, now that the Emperor would not be able to take command. In her view none of the quarrelsome, jealous Netherlands nobles could be considered for this high post, although the appointment of a stranger would be equally impossible because of the unwillingness of the Netherlanders to serve under a foreign commander. In the end Prince Emanuel-Philibert of Piedmont, the Emperor's nephew, though only twenty-five years old, was named "Chief and Captain-General". It was hoped that as a prince of the blood he would at least have some authority over the stubborn nobles.

During the summer months in which these events took place, the Emperor's health improved, yet it was clear that his malady would never leave him and he would never again be capable of resuming his superhuman task. It is probable that during this period of apparent recovery Charles V took the first measures to carry out the idea he had had in mind for so many years: his abdication and the transfer of sovereignty to his son Philip. Early in April a communication¹⁰ had gone to the Prince of Spain, signed by the Emperor but undoubtedly drawn up by Mary, whose ideas it contained, calling Philip to the Netherlands, where his presence had become necessary to prevent those provinces from turning at the Emperor's death to the Austrian Habsburgs, or worse still, to the king of France, who had countless followers among the population. Philip was given to understand that the condition of his hereditary lands was highly critical, that the Queen of Hungary despite her will-power and energy did not command enough authority to compel people to carry out her orders, that the war must be conducted by someone who could be present at the front in person, that the financial situation was more desperate than ever and the fight with France could not be sustained beyond August unless Philip brought the necessary funds with him from Spain. Finally a program was laid before

him which, if rapidly carried out, would make it possible to save the Netherlands. Philip must immediately become engaged to the Infanta of Portugal, daughter of his aunt Éléonore by her first marriage, who would bring him a substantial dowry. His marriage should take place in the Netherlands, and if a son should be born to him there the Netherlanders would realize that they once again possessed a natural ruler and a dynasty of their own. If all this did not happen Philip could count on losing the Netherlands.

Before Philip had reacted to this message, however, changes took place in the European situation which seemed to make an entirely different course of salvation possible. Young King Edward VI of England died after a horrible illness, and the Protestant group which had governed in his name at first succeeded in having Lady Jane Grey, a second cousin of Henry VIII, proclaimed queen; but a revolution by the Catholic part of the population placed upon the throne Henry's eldest daughter, Mary Tudor, who had clung to her old faith with the same martyr's courage as her mother, Catharine of Aragon, and had always regarded the Emperor as her only protector. The Regent had wanted a harbor in England from which she could defend her provinces against France. Now fate had handed over the whole Kingdom of England to Habsburg, and when news of Mary Tudor's accession to the throne reached Brussels, Charles' Council did not hesitate for a moment about the course to be pursued. An express messenger was sent to Spain with orders to Prince Philip to cease immediately his negotiations for a marriage with the Infanta of Portugal. It seemed to him not unlikely, Charles wrote, that the new party in office in England would promptly contrive a marriage for their queen, and would in that connection think of himself, the Emperor. He would reject such an offer, since he did not want to increase the number of his kingdoms, but he had a different plan. If Philip could see eye to eye with him, he would name him as an appropriate candidate for the marriage and he did not doubt that his niece Mary Tudor would accept the proposal with joy.

Even before receiving Philip's answer to this new idea, Mary took measures to prepare the ground in England as much as possible. One of the Emperor's ablest servants, Simon Renard, was sent to England on her initiative to act as adviser to the new queen and impress her with the realization that a marriage with

Philip of Spain would mean her only chance of happiness. Within a few months the charming and intelligent Renard was able to win the complete confidence of the inexperienced Mary Tudor, and she soon let herself be guided entirely by him. When Ferdinand, King of the Romans, suggested to her behind the Emperor's back that she should marry his second son, Ferdinand, she promptly gave Renard this letter to read and immediately a courier departed for Brussels with a copy, so that the Emperor could draw his own conclusions from this attempt of his brother to win the crown of England for his son. Mary Tudor, however, sent Ferdinand a polite reply, drawn up for her by Renard, thanking him for his concern for her future happiness and informing him that her Council would probably advise her to marry an Englishman.

In September Charles felt sufficiently recovered to be taken in a litter to the front, where the French king who had remained on the defensive all summer, now seemed to be preparing a great attack. To her profound relief Mary of Hungary received her brother's permission to accompany him on this journey, so that she could devote herself to him as his first minister, secretary, and nurse.¹¹ But she did not remain long at the front. The news that the Emperor had again joined his army caused the frightened French to give up their autumn campaign. And when imperial spies reported that the French were dismissing their Swiss mercenaries, the Netherlands could be practically certain that they would be spared an enemy invasion in the coming months.

His brief stay at the front, the cold of approaching autumn, had aggravated Charles's malady. The rumor again went round the palace of the dukes of Brabant that the Emperor could not live long. It was known that Prince Philip had been called to the Netherlands and those who sought favor with the heir to the throne collected information which they were able to smuggle into Spain through secret channels, to warn the Prince and to guarantee their own future.

"The Emperor is sicker than he thinks," these turncoats whispered in their letters to Spain. "The doctors are of the opinion that he has only a very short time to live, because he is suffering from many ills at the same time. The Emperor thinks he is improving, but he is getting worse. The gout has now affected all his limbs, all his nerves and joints, even his neck, the last symptom. . . . He is short of breath and can no longer talk. . . .

He suffers from hemorrhoids and cannot move without crying with pain. His illness has altered his character and he is no longer friendly and charming, but plunged in a deep melancholy. They say that he sits lost in thought for hours at a time and then begins to weep like a child. . . . No one dares comfort him or banish his sombre thoughts. Even the Queen of Hungary, of whom he is so fond, or the Queen of France, nobody dares say anything to him. . . .

"His Majesty detests affairs of state. Neither the Bishop of Arras nor his two secretaries dare remind him of anything. Only Eraso dares speak to him and remind him of the army and the war, or of the money that is always lacking.

"Rumors are again current that the Netherlands wish to proclaim another master. They say that Your Royal Highness demands a slavish worship from your subjects and that one cannot approach you but can only have contact with you through a third person, because you are gloomy and silent and speak no Latin, French, or Flemish. They praise Archduke Maximilian to the skies, and it is known that he is jealous of your power, but Count Van Hoorne has much good to say of Your Royal Highness. . . .

"Although His Majesty improved slightly during the summer months, he does not wish to discuss affairs any more or sign documents or listen to anybody. He is only interested in his clocks, which he sets and makes tick in unison. . . . He has many and they are his only concern, with a new clock which he has invented and has had placed before a window. As he cannot sleep at night he sends for his servants and makes them light torches and help him take his clocks apart and then put them together again. . . .

"The Queen of Hungary is visibly suffering under the fate of His Majesty. . . . She is deeply concerned about his health and about the preservation of these countries. . . .

"The Emperor cannot live much longer . . ."

CHAPTER NINE

Freedom at Last



Sommes icy bien esmerveillez du partement de la dicte royne. de Hongrie, femme du plus grant esprit et meilleur qui fut oncques, la plus diligente et myeulx cognoissant les affaires de par decha que nul aultre, et sur laquelle avions grand espoir en noz tribulations de guerre.

We here are much astonished at the departure of the said queen of Hungary, a woman of the greatest spirit and best there ever was, the most diligent and knowing more about Netherlands affairs than anyone else, and of whom we had great hope in our wartime tribulations.

Philippe de Nigri to Jean Carette,
October 1, 1555

IN December 1553 those closest to the Emperor had been informed of his decision to return to Spain. "God grant," wrote his secretary Eraso to Crown Prince Philip,¹ "that I may live to see that day and turn my back upon this place!" However, he apparently did not yet know that the Emperor proposed to leave the Netherlands for good, and intended to abdicate beforehand.

It is probable that Mary had already taken her own decision not to let her sick brother leave for Spain alone. Charles' stay in the Netherlands had provided her, despite all the distress of his illness, with an aim in life and a source of comfort she could no longer do without. Whatever the sorrows and depressions she had experienced there, the cold palace, where formerly she had lived as in an army camp, had become something of a home.

She was no longer alone among inferiors and opponents. She had her brother. She had the companionship of her gentle, modest and affectionate sister Éléonore. She had her niece Christina, waiting at the Brussels court for the moment when peace with France should enable her to return to Lorraine and her young son. Mary's life was difficult and full of troubles, but it was no longer the desert of loneliness she had known in earlier days. Éléonore had also been cherishing the thought of returning to Spain, where she would be nearer to her only child, the Infanta of Portugal. Mary was determined not to stay behind alone if her brother and sister left the Netherlands.

But for the moment there was no question of departure, and during the following winter her days were again filled with care for her brother, whose correspondence she conducted personally, with the daily work of government, with military preparations for continuing the war against France, with the delicate negotiations for Philip's English marriage, which would have to be celebrated before he could come to the Netherlands to take over the task of government from his father.

To encourage Mary Tudor and strengthen her resistance to the strong anti-Spanish tendencies around her, Mary sent her a portrait of Philip by Titian, so that she could form an idea of her future husband's appearance. Mary called her niece's attention to the fact that the portrait had been painted several years earlier and that meanwhile the Prince had grown stronger and more manly. She should look at the picture in full light and from a certain distance, since one could not recognize the likeness in a Titian portrait from too close. She sent the picture to England under one condition, her ambassador Renard was to explain to Mary Tudor: that, since it was only a dead thing, it should be returned as soon as Her Majesty should enjoy the proximity of its subject in the flesh.

Philip took his time in going to England to celebrate a marriage to an unattractive woman twelve years older than himself. Nor did he show any interest in the whole plan for the preservation of his hereditary lands. But in February 1554 the Regent wrote him a severe letter² in which she vainly endeavored to conceal under polite phrases her impatience at his continued absence. He should come to the Netherlands at once.

"Anything is better than to wait until your lands are lost to you, one by one. In unusual circumstances such as these a ruler

has to resort to unusual means. His Majesty has decided that you should come here, and therefore I take this opportunity to describe to you in true colors the desperate condition of our country so that you can give it your attention. Your task will not grow less, but on the contrary will increase, because it will give you as much trouble to hold what you possess as to acquire more. But a good ruler knows that it is his duty to work ceaselessly for the good of his subjects, and the possession of a large territory lays great responsibilities upon him."

When the Prince of Spain finally went to England in July, the Emperor ordered him to spend at most six or eight days with his wife and then to come to the Netherlands. This would be doubly profitable, he wrote. For the English would respect him for going to defend his countries instead of feasting with his bride, while the Netherlands would be grateful to him for the same reason.

The provinces did indeed need help, though it remained to be seen whether Prince Philip's arrival could put any heart into the people. The Netherlands were materially and morally exhausted. They had granted new subsidies for defense but when in the spring of 1554 the French began their attack along the whole southern front, the funds voted had either not yet come in or already been spent, while of government credit there was none. Poverty and war-weariness were known to be no less great in France than in the Low Countries; nevertheless attempts by Charles to open armistice negotiations were brusquely dismissed by the French. Henry II's hatred for Spain had not yet died down. After colossal preparations he unleashed an attack from three sides against the Netherlands in the beginning of summer, carrying it out with such a fury of destruction that not a city or a village in the fighting area seemed destined to remain intact.

Supported by the presence of her brother, Mary mobilized all men fit to bear arms. Merchants and hotel-keepers received orders to put whatever food supplies they possessed at the disposal of the army. All horses were requisitioned, Brussels was put into a state of defense. The Emperor considered the capital safe in the hands of his sister and had himself carried to Namur, where a great French attack seemed imminent. Processions were held in all the Netherlands provinces and prayers offered in the churches for the country's safety and successful defense.

On July 18, Henry II determined to thrust through directly to Brussels. Three days later he appeared before Mary's country residence, Mariemont near Binche, which had already been set afire by his vanguard. In a new demonstration of personal hatred, Henry flung himself at the head of his knights on Mary's park, slashing the trees with his sword, carrying wood with his own hands to feed the flames of the burning castle. And on the smoking ruins he ordered a board to be hung up to remind the "raving queen" of the fact that her troops had once demolished one of his castles: "*Souviens-toi de Folembray, reine insensée!*"

Next day Mary's beloved Binche itself went up in flames. The palace had been emptied in time but Dubroeuq's creation and the fabulous gardens were destroyed. "I can speak of it only with sorrow and sympathy", a French eyewitness wrote of Henry's campaign. "It was heartbreaking to see so many splendid buildings murdered and destroyed."

"I thank you for your report on the generous deeds of the King of France and his gentlemen", Mary wrote when Granvelle had told her of the fate of her property. "As far as I am concerned, I am proud he was pleased to act with such unprecedented hatred toward me and that he let his rage demean him to such unworthy actions. For the whole world will be able to see by this act what a humble and loyal servant of His Imperial Majesty I am and that is the greatest fame I ever can achieve. The material damage really leaves me cold. The same thing might have happened to me by fire or foul play, and I am not a woman who puts her heart into such things and then greatly regrets losing them, like transitory and mutable objects which one should use when one has them and be able to do without if one has not. And that is all the sorrow I feel about it."

This summer of 1554 did not leave Mary much time to grieve over a personal material loss. The salvation of the Netherlands once more depended upon her work and energy, upon her gift for being present everywhere at the same time, at it were, taking in the whole political, military, and economic situation at a glance and inspiring her assistants to do their utmost.

In October Charles returned to Brussels. So great was his longing for solitude, rest, and quiet that he could not persuade himself to take up residence again in his grand apartments. Instead he moved into a small house in the park behind them, which Mary had bought some years before and which had been re-

built by one of the court architects during this summer, according to Charles' instructions. Here he began the retired life his health made necessary, and here he was to occupy for the rest of his stay in Brussels two small green-painted rooms, easier to heat than the high rooms of the palace. Walls and windows were decorated with his coat of arms and that challenging imperial device, "Plus Oultre", which had now acquired quite a different significance. His move to these modest quarters where practically no one was admitted to his presence made it clear to his entourage that the Emperor had taken leave not only of the soldier's life which he had loved, but also of the ruler's life which had become a torment to him.

From that moment on Charles V reigned in name only. It was his sister Mary upon whom the entire responsibility for affairs of state now came to rest, and who promptly had to meet a storm of criticism from her Netherlands generals, who blamed the small success of the summer campaign on the weak leadership of the captain-general, the Prince of Piedmont, who had seldom let them take part in the conduct of the war.

Once again Mary showed that she had acquired an eye for the interests of the Netherlands themselves and no longer exclusively followed a Habsburg policy. It was she who now urged the Emperor that his own Netherlands generals should have a say in the management of affairs. But in the following months the jealousy between them and the foreign commanders, and among the Netherlands nobles themselves, took on such proportions that in all ranks of the imperial army a total lack of discipline prevailed, which the Regent, for all her efforts, was unable to alter. Now that the man who had for so long been the brain and heart of his world empire was no longer able to knit together and control opposing forces, a process of disintegration of the entire state seemed to have set in, which spread with alarming rapidity. While the nobles opposed each other and the foreign generals attempted to secure their positions against the moment when the Emperor, who had appointed them, should be succeeded by his son; while the Spanish troops terrorized the country and poverty, sickness, and hunger took their toll, the population of the Netherlands fell more and more prey to a mood of dark and hopeless revolt. Revolt against the increasingly severe measures in religious matters which destroyed every trace of personal freedom. Revolt against the endless series of war-taxes which

paralyzed trade and industry. Revolt against the presence of the Emperor's unruly foreign soldiers, whose arrival in the cities caused riots which had then to be put down by more foreign soldiers.

The symptoms of deterioration appearing in social and economic life, in politics and religion, also made themselves felt in the conduct of the war against France. Whereas in the spring of 1555 the failure of armistice negotiations showed that neither Charles V nor Henry II were prepared to drop any of their demands, the war had now degenerated into a weak struggle carried on with treachery, corruption, and deceit as its main weapons. Fortresses were taken on both sides, not by deeds of heroism, but by bribing their commanders. Both sides suffered from lack of funds, from despair and war-weariness. But the hatred between the Habsburgs and the King of France had gone so far that the struggle which threatened to destroy their countries could not be brought to an end.

The disintegration extended even to the imperial court. Since the Emperor's return there had been such a scarcity of money that the payment of salaries had to be stopped, and even the household accounts remained outstanding for months. When news of the death of the Emperor's mother, Juana the Mad, reached Brussels in April 1555, the funeral ceremonies had to be postponed because the Emperor could not afford appropriate mourning hangings for the church. Mary of Hungary, upon whom fell the obloquy of this critical situation, hoped in vain that her nephew Philip, now King of England, would come to his father's assistance with Spanish and English funds. But Philip still did not dream of coming to the Netherlands; he was not yet convinced that he would have a sufficiently important role to play there, and now that he officially bore the title of king—although his English subjects seldom referred to him except as "the queen's husband"—he had no wish to occupy second place in his own country.

Furthermore Philip himself suffered from a serious lack of money; he could neither pay his enormous debts nor make preparations for a suitably impressive arrival in the Netherlands. The Regent had just managed, by means of ten companies of German foot-soldiers and a body of German cavalry, to nip in the bud a threatening revolt in Antwerp, and this gave her an unexpected hold over the city government and the great bankers.

She did not hesitate to exploit this opportunity and before her return to Brussels she succeeded in arranging two loans which would enable her nephew to undertake at last his journey to the Netherlands. With money extorted from Antwerp by German troops, Mary of Hungary bought the freedom she was determined should not again escape her. "The King of England arrived here yesterday," an eye-witness wrote to a friend from Brussels in the first week of September. "He was in an unusually cheerful mood and so polite to all the ladies that he had his hat in his hand almost incessantly. The Queen of Hungary did not go to meet him outside the city because the Emperor did not wish it. I have the impression that His Majesty did not wish the King to speak to the Queen first. I do not know whether there is not some jealousy here . . . if I were with you I could tell you various things about it . . ."

Again it was a symptom of tragic disintegration, this time apparently in the personality of the Emperor himself, in his attitude towards his sister, who had served him all her life with incomparable loyalty and whose influence upon his son he now seemed to fear. Had it escaped Charles, had Mary been able to conceal from the sick man whom she wished to spare as much as possible, that between her and Philip there existed only a mutual antipathy, which a keen observer like the Venetian ambassador Badoaro did not hesitate to label hatred? Or was it not jealousy, as was whispered in Brussels, but fear of the consequences of that hatred which Mary on her side would certainly not try to hide? Had Charles' knowledge of people and his understanding of personal relationships suffered, like his physical and mental vitality, from his long years of illness? Had he been affected by the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, of whispered conjectures, which had prevailed of late at the court of Brussels? Perhaps it was not suspicion, but certainty. Perhaps the Emperor knew that he had cause to be afraid. That he had in fact, as historians have surmised, reason to regard his only son as an enemy who actually threatened his life.

If Charles V really feared an assassin in the service of his son, the decision he announced shortly after Philip's return, to hand over to him the sovereignty of the Netherlands was indeed his best protection. Whoever in those autumn days of 1555 may have tried to keep him from taking this step, it was certainly not Philip, who longed for the moment when he could call himself King of

Spain as well as King of England. And it was certainly not his sister Mary, whose decision to follow her brother in his retreat stood firm.

Both the Emperor and his son did everything possible to convince the Regent that it was essential she should remain in office, in order to preserve the Netherlands for the House of Habsburg, and that she would undertake a great responsibility if those countries should be lost to her nephew because of her departure. But Mary remained adamant. She had too often obeyed the command, disguised as a personal request, to remain at her post. She knew that if she did not go now, at the same time as her brother the Emperor, only death could free her from her de-tested office.

Knowing the Emperor's disappointment that even his pleas and indirect threats could not dissuade her from her purpose, Mary wrote down her motives in one of those memoranda to which she resorted whenever verbal explanations seemed impossible or inexpedient. She laid this document before her brother, humbly begging him, as she put it in her opening sentences, to take note of it with the same confidence which she had in him, whom she regarded, after God himself, as her all in this world.

"Mon tout en ce monde." Simple words, and true. The devotion of a lifetime is impressively demonstrated in this memorandum, in which by a mere enumeration of the dates on which she had received an evasive reply to her repeated request to be released, showed what a limitless sense of duty had been demanded of her and how well she had fulfilled that demand.

"As the King your son has arrived in the Netherlands, thank God," Mary wrote, "I regard my release, with your gracious permission, as an unalterable fact, and I beg Your Majesty with the greatest humility at my command not to take it ill of me and to keep me in your affection nevertheless. May Your Majesty now consider sufficient the love and obedience I have shown him, and not forget that until today I have let that love and obedience take precedence over my vow to God, which I made in the presence of Your Majesty himself, that I would occupy my office for only a short time.

"But even if I had not made that promise, I still could not justify myself in the eyes of God if I occupied this office any longer. My conscience is troubled by carrying on this function

without satisfying all its demands. The more experience I have of it, the more I have realized that I am unable to accomplish my task properly.

"I am of the opinion that whoever acts as regent for a ruler must have more understanding of affairs than the person who governs on his own account and is therefore only responsible to God. If he does whatever lies within his power, he has done his duty. But a regent has to account not only to God, but also to his sovereign and his sovereign's subjects.

"And even if I possessed all the aptitudes necessary to govern well, and I am far from doing so, experience has taught me that a woman is not suited to the purpose, neither in peacetime nor in time of war. Your Majesty is himself in a position to judge that I have often done more than was fitting for my position and vocation as a woman, out of eagerness to serve you and accomplish my task as well as possible. Your Majesty also knows what insurmountable difficulties we would have met with if you had not been in the country yourself during the last war. Difficulties which I could not have removed, because as a woman I was compelled to leave the conduct of the war to others.

"Although I feel for Monseigneur your son so much love and affection that I would in any respect within my power serve him not less gladly than I have done Your Majesty, Your Majesty will nevertheless be able to understand that it is difficult for someone like me, who has served you till the end, to have to think in my old age of learning my ABC all over again. It is suitable that a woman of fifty who has served for at least twenty-four years, should content herself for the rest of her life with one God and one master. Moreover, I see in the Netherlands a young generation to whose ways I cannot and would not wish to accommodate myself. Loyalty and respect towards God and the sovereign have deteriorated in such a way and the number of devoted servants is so small (a phenomenon to be observed not only in this country but almost everywhere) that not only would I not wish to rule over such people, even if I were a man and sufficiently capable, but I take so much offense at them that I do not wish to live even as a private person surrounded by people amongst whom I cannot do my duty, either towards God or towards my sovereign. I can assure Your Majesty, and God is my witness, that I loathe governing so much that I would rather work for my living than occupy myself with it. And even

if I were the ruler of the most beautiful and powerful country in the world, I would wish to lay down my crown in order to spend the rest of my life as a private individual and to serve God as well as possible, without concerning myself in any way with public life. Thus I hope I shall be able to live, if Your Majesty will grant me this favor as a reward for the services I have rendered, even though they were not as great as I would have wished. But I have carried out my task with such complete devotion and loyalty, and such boundless love, that if my knowledge and ability and capacity had been equal to it, no sovereign would ever have been so excellently served as Your Majesty by me.

"I beseech Your Majesty to confer upon me the benefit of your approval of the manner in which I expect to arrange my life as a private person. For I should have no peace in this world if I did not know that I lived according to Your Majesty's wish. You will remember that some years ago I told you that since my widowhood I have wanted to go to Spain, to devote myself to the late Queen our mother.

"It has pleased God to take this task from me, yet there remains a second one. Since the Queen of France has also been widowed, and we have got to know each other personally, she has at various times assured me that she would give up the possibility of being near her daughter, which living in Spain would offer her (where furthermore she would feel happier than here), rather than desert me; and that if I had neither the wish nor the possibility of going to Spain, she had decided to live where I live, and would give up her daughter and her own preference for mine. In view of her wish, and the sisterly love I bear her, I would certainly consider myself ungrateful if I did not accommodate myself to her preference. Furthermore if I go with her to Spain, I achieve a threefold very desirable aim, apart from the satisfaction of living in such agreeable company. In the first place, I would be nearer to Your Majesty, which is the greatest joy I can imagine. In the second place, I would retire to a safer spot than this country, which is almost continuously at war, and I would have more peace, as I would be able to withdraw from all affairs of government. To tell Your Majesty the truth, I fear that if I remained in this country I would be drawn into them more than I wish, and if I refused (which I should do, as I am absolutely determined to live without such worries) I

would only get into difficulties which I could avoid by leaving the country.

"On the other hand, there is the following point. If the Queen, who has poor health, should die, I would be all alone in a country where I know nobody, where the way of life is different from what I am used to, and where I might feel a stranger. But the advantages are greater than the drawbacks, particularly as I do not cling so strongly to my habits that I could not adapt myself to any country whatever, as long as it belongs to Your Majesty's empire. And even if God should take the Queen to himself first, that might not happen so soon that I could not first have made myself acquainted with the country and its ways; and if the worst came to the worst, which I do not hope, if I could not get used to living in Spain, I would still have time to see how things develop and be able to go back to the Netherlands.

"I have informed the Queen of your decision to leave soon, but advised her to make her own plans in consultation with Your Majesty. In case you should leave very soon, she might even be obliged to miss the advantage of traveling to Spain with Your Majesty. This she would very much regret, for otherwise the journey would be very long, difficult, unsafe, and much too expensive for her. To enable me to do my duty toward Your Majesty and not disappoint you in what you expect of me, namely that I should not neglect things, I beg Your Majesty to inform me how I should act in this matter. And I beg Your Majesty to receive this letter favorably, for it is dictated by necessity to her who wishes to live and die as your most humble and obedient sister and servant, Mary."

The Emperor seemed to have resigned himself to his sister's wish to go to Spain with him. At the end of September the startling news went the rounds in the Netherlands that the Queen of Hungary would be relieved of the regency and would leave the country. The report aroused a sensation, a shock of excitement, which could not have been greater had it been learned that the sea had inundated Antwerp or that the earth had opened to swallow Brussels. The people of the Netherlands feared and hated the Queen of Hungary as the personification of the detested Habsburg autocracy, the merciless instrument of imperial despotism. But at the same time they had known her now for a quarter of a century as the steadfast defender of the country, the permanent authority which remained when all else

seemed to vacillate, the inescapable reality, often execrated but always solid as a rock, the hard but dependable basis of the nation's existence. The news that the Queen was giving up the regency gave them the feeling that their last certainty was falling away, that the future could only bring a chaos of confusion which nobody would be able to check. And those who knew of the Regent's tireless labors admitted to each other that the Netherlands were on the point of losing a ruler of such stature that she could be considered one of the ablest, bravest, and most brilliant women that had ever lived, the greatest expert in Netherlands affairs, the best protector in danger of war the country had ever possessed. If the general dismay the prospect of her departure aroused penetrated to Mary of Hungary, she must have experienced the greatest satisfaction of her difficult career.

The certainty of her going was confirmed by the fact that on September 24, 1555, she and her sister, the Queen of France, informed the ladies and gentlemen of their court that they should prepare to leave in the near future. On the first of October the two queens dismissed their households, retaining in their service only a few who would accompany them to Spain. The astonished courtiers learned at the same time that the Emperor would not only leave for Spain in October, but that he had moreover taken the incredible decision to abdicate in favor of his son Philip.

Thus Mary of Hungary performed her last duties as Regent of the Netherlands and prepared the historic meeting at which her brother would hand over the sovereignty of these provinces and she herself would bid farewell to the people she had governed in the Emperor's name for almost twenty-five years. A mixture of conflicting emotions, of joy at her approaching freedom and sorrow at parting, of love and compassion for her brother and impotent opposition to the young ruler who was to succeed him, must have assailed Mary when upon that afternoon of October 25, on which the transfer of authority was to take place, she waited in the Privy Council's assembly room for the Emperor's arrival. She herself had arranged the protocol of the ceremony, and while she conversed with the Knights of the Golden Fleece in the familiar room where she had presided over so many meetings, she knew what was happening from minute to minute in and around the palace of the dukes of Brabant, what actions the principal personages had to perform before they

would take part in the moving spectacle of which she was the producer.

While a hum of voices came to her from the corridor where many hundreds of delegates pressed forward to take their places, she knew that the Emperor had left his small house and was now resting for a few moments in his former apartments after his drive through the park. Already the doors of the assembly room swung open to let in the Prince of Spain, who had accompanied the Emperor with a few courtiers and who now, pale and nervous, at the prescribed moment took his place beside the Regent amidst the Knights of the Golden Fleece. A few hushed words of greeting faded into a tense silence, which was broken only by the crackle of satin, the tinkle of insignia, the rattle of a sword-hilt.

The minutes passed. Events proceeded according to protocol, and seemed filled with the irrevocability of this historic hour, as if they had been determined by fate at the beginning of time.

Once more the doors opened, and the Emperor entered, deadly pale and very old, supporting himself by the stick which had become indispensable to him. Prince William of Orange stepped forward from the group of Knights.

In the great hall, decorated with the famous tapestries recording the history of the Golden Fleece, only the murmur of low voices could be heard. Not a single one of the almost one thousand seats was unoccupied, and at the back the fortunate burghers who had been able to obtain admission to the space reserved for the public waited in respectful silence. Archers and halberdiers of the palace guard stood on either side of the broad folding doors upon which the eyes of those present remained fixed as the moment approached at which the ceremony was to begin.

A short command rang out. The members of the Estates General rose from their seats. The spectators craned their necks to see. And in the wide door-opening they beheld the figure of the Emperor, leaning upon his stick, with his right hand on the shoulder of the Prince of Orange.

The audience bowed. The Emperor returned the greeting of the Estates General while, supported by his young and elegant courtier, he moved slowly and with difficulty towards the platform, followed by his son Philip, his sister Mary, the Knights of the Golden Fleece, and his Councilors.

From her seat at the Emperor's left, Mary, the only woman in

this company, now looked out for the last time upon the crowd of representatives, who had come to Brussels in greater number than ever before. Many times she had attended such gatherings but seldom had her task been as simple as now. She no longer needed to use influence or pressure upon the provincial representatives, did not need to ask them for funds nor to justify her brother's policy. She had only to speak a few words of farewell, and seated there upon her throne beside the Emperor she could already now consider herself what she had so longed with heart and soul to be: a private individual, free to live her own life after a quarter-century of duty.

Perhaps she looked, nevertheless, with a certain melancholy along the rows of deputies who had intimidated her so much the first time she appeared before them and with whom she had since so often crossed swords. She probably did not pay much attention to the speech in which one of the Councilors explained His Majesty's motives in deciding to abdicate. But when her brother began to put on his spectacles and consulted the notes upon the small piece of paper he held in his hand, she too must have shared in the increasing tension that was felt throughout the hall.

She knew that Charles did not intend to deliver an official speech. He spoke to the representatives of the people as a father to his children, and it must have seemed to Mary, listening to her brother's familiar voice, as if she heard the story of her own experiences. He spoke of his youth and his difficult life. Of his countless journeys throughout all the countries of his Empire, and the dangers to which he had had to expose himself. He spoke of the endless wars which had been forced upon him and which he had waged for the protection of his subjects. He mentioned with admiration and respect his sister, the Regent Mary, who had assisted him with so much wisdom and devotion. He described his cares and his illnesses, and assured his hearers that he did not abdicate for selfish reasons but exclusively because he no longer felt capable of carrying the onerous burden of government.

"I know, gentlemen," the Emperor ended, "I know that in my long life I have made serious mistakes, either because of my youth, my ignorance, my negligence, or through other shortcomings. But I can assure you that I have never consciously done violence or injustice to a single one of my subjects. If this

nevertheless happened, it was not intentionally but through ignorance and I am sorry about it and ask forgiveness for it."

The humility of Charles' words, his aged appearance and his weakness, moved the deputies to tears. When some of them burst out sobbing, Mary could no longer keep back her own tears. The Emperor wept, too. The Clerk of the Estates of Brabant, however, whose task it was to reply to His Majesty's words, gave those present an opportunity to recover from their emotion by delivering a bombastic and boring oration.

The audience's interest increased again when they saw how the Prince of Spain knelt before his father and tried to kiss his hand. Now the Emperor made his son stand up again and embraced him. Only those sitting in the first rows were able to hear the words which the old ruler spoke in Spanish to his successor: "My dear and own son, I give, cede and transfer to you all my lands over here, just as I possess them, with all the benefits, profits, and emoluments, recommending to you the religion of the holy Church, good policy and justice, requesting all the Estates to remain well united, as they have been."

According to the Flemish translation left to us by the deputy from Ypres, Philip replied, also in Spanish: "Sire, you have given me a very great burden. Nevertheless I have always been submissive to Your Majesty, and shall again fulfill your desire, accepting these countries, begging Your Majesty to assist these countries and to grant them your favor."

The solemnity of the moment once more moved the Emperor and his emotion imparted itself again to those present when he turned to them and said in a trembling voice: "You must not be astonished, gentlemen, if, old and weak of limb as I am, and also through my love for you, I shed a few tears."

This time it was the Prince of Spain who broke the spell of the moment. Without rising from his chair upon which he had sat down again, he said in stammering and scarcely comprehensible French: "Gentlemen, although I understand French reasonably well it is still difficult for me to address you in that language. You shall hear what the Bishop of Arras will say to you in my name."

The members of the Estates General were not particularly interested in Granvelle's repeated assurance that the Prince had accepted sovereignty over the Netherlands only at the Emperor's explicit command. But when after his speech the Queen of

Hungary requested the Emperor's permission to address a few words to them, a movement of revived interest stirred their ranks. Many of them had often had reason enough to fear the Regent, or hated her for mercilessly carrying out the tyrannical edicts. But she was also known to be boundlessly courageous, energetic and purposeful and, as far as her office permitted, sincere and just. Above all, she was no foreigner and despite all the opposition she had called forth they were attached to her.

Mary spoke to the delegates as her brother had done, simply and modestly, if somewhat less spontaneously. She had begged His Majesty the Emperor, she told them, that he should now consider the services she had performed for him sufficient, after having requested him for many years to relieve her of her office.

"I assure you, Gentlemen, that if my shortcomings have been the cause of His Majesty having been less well served and you yourselves less well governed than I would have wished, this is not due to a lack of good will. For if my capacities, my knowledge, and my powers had been equal to the good will, the love and the devotion with which I have given myself to this office, I know for certain that no ruler could have been better served and no land better governed than you. With the most sincere humility of which I am capable, I beg Your Majesty and you, Monseigneur, and you all, gentlemen, to be satisfied with the services I have performed in my office, since I have given myself to it completely. If I have failed, I beseech you to forgive me and to ascribe my mistakes to my lack of ability, which without doubt would have led me to commit many errors, were it not that your predecessors and yourselves have supported me with your advice and information. I shall not cease to call myself fortunate in this respect, and to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I assure you not only that you have done your duty in this way toward your good sovereign and your own welfare, but that all you have been willing to do to help me was done for someone who was and still is inspired with the greatest possible devotion to yourselves and your interests. As was my duty, I have always cherished the wish to be obliging to everyone and to go from you in peace and friendship. I assure you that, wherever I may be, you will find me in no smaller measure than in the past ready to do what lies in my power to further your well-being and be agreeable to you." ⁸

Mary ceased to speak. The Emperor turned to her and thanked

her with great warmth for the excellent services she had rendered him during so many years. And while Mary realized that she had now really completed her task, and that outside the great hall of the palace freedom awaited her, she must have learned that the fulfilment of one's fondest wish can leave an emptiness so unexpected and unfathomable that life itself seems to have lost its meaning.

CHAPTER TEN

Death in Harness



L'ofre que ay fait à l'empereur
que à vous . . . que vous voroie
servir et obeir en tout jusques à
la mort.

The offer I made to the Emperor
and to you . . . that I would wish
to serve and obey you in every-
thing until death.

Mary to Ferdinand,
December, 1530

NOW the days went by more quickly than ever before, and they were lighter than Mary had ever known. In the ports of Zeeland a convoy fleet was already being prepared to accompany the Spanish galleons in which the imperial party was to sail to Spain. Even before the abdication ceremony Mary and her sister Éléonore had received many noble ladies, who had traveled from all over the country to Brussels to take leave of them. Now Mary could devote her days to preparations for her departure and to her private affairs. On December 3 she signed her will, in which she named her brother and her nephew sole heirs. To her sister she left her furniture, tapestries, and carpets, and to her servants her clothing and underwear and objects of daily use, with the exception of her gold and silver plate.

At the close of this simple document Mary added one condition which throws a sudden sidelight upon her lonely, work-filled life: "Since the death of the late King my husband I have worn a gold heart which he also wore until his death. I wish this heart, with the little chain on which it hangs, to be melted down

and the proceeds given to the poor. For in view of the fact that until their last breath it has been inseparable from two people who, though parted for a long time in body have never been so in love and affection, it is fitting that it should be consumed and change its nature as the bodies of these lovers have done . . .” Mary of Hungary has been called proud and hard and even cruel. But what loyalty is expressed in this last wish, which in her later testaments she never failed to repeat with emphasis!

While servants were busy packing paintings and tapestries, gold and silver plate, objets d’art, furniture, and carpets, the court treasurers came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to pay the overdue salaries of the dismissed members of the household. It did not seem to be in keeping with his dignity that the Emperor should leave the country without having settled these personal debts, and Charles was obliged to postpone his departure until the spring.

As a result of this delay, the rest for which Mary had longed so much was repeatedly disturbed, since she became once again involved, if only as an adviser, in various matters from which she had hoped to be released. Her brother had intended to transfer the sovereignty over the Iberian kingdoms to Philip after his arrival in Spain. But in January, quite unexpectedly and for reasons at which his entourage could only guess, he called his son, his two sisters and a few Knights of the Golden Fleece to his small house in the park, and in their presence handed over this sovereignty to Philip also. This new glory strengthened Philip in his desire to leave the Netherlands and return to his beloved Spain, where he could now act as monarch, instead of as regent, and where he could avoid the war with France which might at any moment flare up. Mary was at Turnhout when she learned from Granvelle that her nephew had had the temerity to suggest to his sick father that he, the Emperor, might stay in the Netherlands a little longer to keep an eye on the course of affairs both in the provinces and in Italy, while Philip himself returned to Spain via England.

To Mary this was another example of Philip’s heartless egotism and blinding ambition, against which she had so often tried to protect her brother and herself. “I believe that His Majesty will not be able to postpone his journey for so long, and to tell the truth, with reason,” she replied to Granvelle. “For I do not know whether it will contribute to the reputation and honor of the

King if he lets his father, in the present state of his health, wrestle with all the difficulties in order to go back to Spain himself. In case it were possible to persuade His Majesty to continue to occupy himself with affairs of state for his son's sake before he retires for good, I would still think it more fitting if these were Spanish affairs instead of Netherlands and Italian, which are the business of those succeeding to the government rather than of those who have abdicated. I fear that the people who gave this advice were concerned with their own interest rather than with the honor, the good name and the obligations of their ruler."

Once again it was apparent how difficult it was for Charles to refuse his son anything. He agreed to remain in the Netherlands until August on the pretext that this would give him the opportunity to see his daughter Maria and her husband, Archduke Maximilian, who wished to pay a visit to Brussels on their way from Spain to Germany. So in that summer of 1556 the Brussels palace regained once more its former glory. Once more for weeks on end the night sky above the city glowed with the reflection from illuminations and torchlight processions, once more the people of Brussels gathered to see the imperial family on the balcony of the town hall and to watch a joust upon the Great Square in all its pageantry. Until on August 8 two royal processions left the capital—that of the German guests in an easterly direction, that of the Emperor along the road to his native city of Ghent. When a few days later the two queens and King Philip with the members of their households had also departed, the burghers of Brussels must have found their beautiful city very empty and quiet, and their future more uncertain than ever.

From Ghent, where Charles and his sisters took leave of Philip, the imperial party proceeded to Walcheren, to await at Souburg the moment when the admiral of the Spanish galleons could announce a favorable wind.

On September 15, 1556, Charles V boarded the Spanish vessel named *El Espíritu Santo*, while his sisters went aboard the flagship of the Netherlands fleet, *Le Faucon*. For two days longer a southwest wind obliged the two fleets to remain at anchor near the fort of Rammekens. But in the afternoon of September 17 a fresh northwester filled the sails and slowly the stately squadrons moved away from the Netherlands coast, which neither Charles nor his sisters were ever to see again. In Spain as well as in the

Low Countries prayers were said and masses read in churches and monasteries, and in the cities and villages processions were held, to pray God for a favorable journey for the sovereign, on his way to exchange the glory of an empire for the quiet of a monastic home.

The prayers were heard. Mary's first and last sea voyage was a most peaceful trip, and only towards the end, in the Bay of Biscay, was it disturbed by bad weather. After eleven days the captain of *The Falcon* was able to tell his royal passengers that the Spanish coast was in sight, and in the light of a radiant September day Mary of Hungary beheld for the first time the unknown land where she hoped to begin a new life.

And how new it all was to her! Too new for her to feel offended by the fact that the orders of the Spanish Regent, Charles's daughter Juana, for the reception of the Emperor's party, had not yet been carried out, so that in Laredo they found neither a deputation nor letters nor funds to welcome them, not even priests to read mass or doctors to look after the many soldiers and sailors who had fallen ill on the voyage. Nothing seems to have spoiled Mary's delight in the fact that she had turned her back on the Netherlands for good, that she was freed of her duties and responsibilities, and at last able to lead her own life. The Netherlands who had accompanied the Emperor and who longed for the moment when they would receive permission to return home, saw to their astonishment how the Queen of Hungary had grown years younger in a few weeks' time, and seemed so much changed that she scarcely resembled any longer the severe, worried, stern woman they had feared so much. The good-natured Queen of France, always ready to be happy when she saw contented faces about her, was radiant with joy at her younger sister's youthful high spirits. Neither of them now had a greater worry than the question of where they should finally settle and whether their rooms in the capital city of Valladolid, where they were going to stay temporarily, would be high enough to hang the tapestries they had brought along from Brussels. The problems for which Mary had formerly been responsible so often—providing carriages and horses for the journey overland, financing the court's daily traveling needs—were now, thank heavens, solved by others. And when on October 10, two days after her brother, she left the small port of Laredo, Mary, on horseback beside her sister's litter, was free

to enjoy the strange, grandiose landscape which now unfolded before her, and which, as they advanced in the direction of Burgos, showed less and less resemblance to the green countryside of the Netherlands.

After a few days' halt at Burgos the two queens continued on their way to Valladolid, where they were received with the honors destined for the Emperor, which he however had declined. Charles did not wish to complicate his journey by official receptions and fatiguing ceremonies. He only wished to reach as soon as possible the house that had been built for him at his own instructions beside the lonely monastery of Yuste, in a wide valley at the foot of the Sierra de Plasencia, and was only interested to know whether after the tiring journey there he would find a warm room, or whether he would have to use the portable stove that had been specially made for his trip. Warmth and a well-provided table were the only demands he now made upon life, and he was grateful for the attentions of his daughter Juana, who supplied him with fresh fruit and sent him down quilts out of which he had a coat made.

During the journey to Valladolid Mary had learned from the Spanish nobles who now were her traveling companions, that the inclement climate of the region where her brother wished to live was far from favorable to his health and might even be fatal to him. They had drawn such an alarming picture of the heat in summer, the biting cold in winter, of the bad and dangerous roads and the lack of food in the surrounding country, that she felt she should warn her brother of the consequences of his decision to live in such an inhospitable place. But once again Charles would not let himself be dissuaded either by his family or by his entourage. After a short visit to Yuste he determined to move as soon as possible into his house, which was still under construction.

Mary and Éléonore, who now appeared everywhere together and were referred to as "the Queens," spent the winter months in Valladolid, but soon came to the conclusion that a gentler neighborhood than the barren Castilian plateau would be more attractive as a permanent residence. Mary's love of hunting made her long for a greener, more wooded landscape, and as the Emperor had made it clear to his sisters that he wished to be disturbed as little as possible, their choice fell upon Guadalajara, situated far from Yuste, to the east of Madrid, which Philip had

presented to his aunt Éléonore. But before they carried out this plan Éléonore wished to meet her only daughter, the Infanta of Portugal, who had grown up at the Portuguese court and whom she had not seen since she herself had left the country.

The fulfillment of this natural wish encountered insurmountable difficulties. The Infanta, who had once been promised marriage to her cousin Philip but had been ignored in favor of Queen Mary Tudor of England, was still unmarried, and the King of Portugal, her half-brother, did not wish to let her leave Portugal, even for a brief visit to her mother, before the Emperor had found a suitable husband for her. But a still greater disappointment awaited Éléonore. The Infanta seemed not in the least inclined to settle in a foreign country with a mother she did not know, and thought of endless pretexts to escape from Éléonore's plans.

In the first week of February 1557 the queens in Valladolid learned that their brother had dismissed his Netherlands followers and had definitely taken up residence at Yuste. The few servants who followed him into his retreat were soon close to despair, so depressed were they by the sadness and loneliness of their new surroundings, where, according to one of Charles's secretaries, one could only hold out if one had taken leave of life and its pleasures for good. But the Emperor himself revived in the peace of his simple rooms which looked out over the wide plain of La Vera. His health improved visibly, and in the spring he even began to show some interest in the political events from which he had voluntarily withdrawn. Now he was no longer averse to visitors, and he informed his two sisters that he was prepared to receive them, in order to discuss their plans for the future and the marriage of Éléonore's daughter. He warned them, however, that his modest home was not suitable to receive guests, so that they would have to bring all their household equipment with them if they wished to stay in Yuste itself. In Jarandilla, not far from Yuste, a comfortable house was available, and there the members of the numerous suite with which they were still accustomed to surround themselves could be housed.

Mary and Éléonore did not see their brother again until the end of September. They must both have had the impression that the architects had taken the royal patient's special requirements fully into account and that the miniature palace with its tapestries,

paintings, and valuable furniture certainly did not condemn their brother to the ascetic life of a monk.

The queens stayed at Jarandilla, in the house of the Count of Oropesa, till the middle of December, but their visits to Yuste were rare, since the fatiguing journey thither was a great strain, on Éléonore particularly. Therefore Mary occasionally visited her brother alone, to plead the interests of her sister who now cherished but one wish: to know that her daughter was married and to see her again, even though the Infanta continued to refuse to settle in Spain. A solution was finally found by which the queens and the princess were to meet at Badajoz, near the Portuguese border. On December 14 they made for the last time the journey from Jarandilla to Yuste, despite biting cold and snowstorms which had made the roads practically impassable. They found their brother recovering from a severe attack of his malady and from intestinal disturbances which had made him extremely weak. It was only a brief visit, as the queens intended to start on their long trip to Badajoz next day.

It was the Emperor's wish that his sisters should be accompanied by an impressive following so that they could receive the Portuguese Infanta in royal style. A summons went out, signed in the name of King Philip by the Princess Regent of Spain, to a number of *grandees*, with the command that they should hold themselves available for the journey. But to Mary's indignation most of the nobles simply ignored the royal order. Among the few who accepted was a faithful servant and friend of the Emperor, Don Luis d'Avila. "I could very well have pleaded my health as an excuse," he wrote to Charles' secretary Vazquez, "and I certainly could have pointed out that I wish to pay off my debts and have no means left for traveling about with queens. I should have been happy if they had not thought of me. But the Queens of France and Hungary were so insistent, that I did not have the strength to defend myself. Thus I have undertaken to accompany their Majesties so that at least they will have someone to talk French to."

Éléonore certainly needed a little distraction. She had to wait in Badajoz for almost a month for the arrival of her daughter, who with her ponderous suite of untraveled ladies in waiting and her endless baggage train required no less than sixteen days to cover thirty-three miles. As the weeks went by, Éléonore could hardly

believe any longer that the reunion with her daughter would really take place and even when the Infanta had come to within three miles of Badajoz, her mother was convinced that she might turn back after all. When at last she saw her daughter again, the emotion was almost too much for poor Éléonore, who for several nights had been too nervous to sleep.

Éléonore's tearful joy at the reunion, which also affected the Infanta herself, was followed by the heartbreaking disappointment that her daughter was not only unwilling to settle with her in Spain but also stuck to her decision to return to Lisbon in three weeks' time. The meeting Éléonore had so longed for was spent in fruitless scenes that consumed the last remnants of her strength. When she and Mary started on their return trip on February 10, three days after the Infanta's departure from Badajoz, Éléonore's health appeared to have suffered so much that she could not even complete the first day's journey. Shaking with fever and gasping for breath she was carried into a peasant's cottage, so weak that her companions dared not take off her heavy traveling dress or even put her to bed. There, seated in a chair, she remained for eight long days, slowly dying, perfectly conscious and despite her suffering so patiently submitting to God's will that her distressed attendants felt they were witnessing the passing of a saint. "The Queen of France has chosen another path," wrote Luis d'Avila after her death. "May the Lord give her a place in Heaven. For she was really an innocent saint and there was no more evil in her than in an old pigeon [paloma vieja] . . ."

The death of her sister was the heaviest blow that could have struck Mary at this time. Scarcely a year and a half after they had begun their new life together she was deprived of the devoted companion she had been able to look after and whose interests had become her own. When Éléonore's ordeal had at last ended, Mary, who had had to witness it helplessly during those eight days, was broken-hearted. Charles' majordomo Quijada, whom he had sent out as soon as news of Éléonore's illness reached Yuste, found Mary unable to discuss his mission, for tears and sobs made it impossible for her to speak. "The Queen of Hungary is so much affected," he wrote to his colleague Vazquez in Valladolid, "that it is a heart-rending sight."

But Mary had to pay attention to the affairs on which her

brother needed her advice. During Éléonore's illness she had already learned from Charles's secretary Gastelú the shockingly bad news from the Netherlands, where her nephew Philip had failed to make use of a brilliant victory his generals had won over the French at St. Quentin. The Duke of Guise had now taken by surprise the key position of Calais and the fate of Grevelingen and of South Flanders was in jeopardy. Helpless and isolated at Yuste, the Emperor needed contact with his sister, who through her knowledge of local conditions might be able to reassure him or to give advice which could be sent on to Philip.

Mary set out for Yuste as soon as her sister's remains had been interred in a church in the nearby town of Mérida. She knew that the Emperor was ill again, and though she felt weak and exhausted after Éléonore's death, and had been warned by severe palpitations to take care of herself, she hastened to her brother's sickbed. After all, he was the only person who could now give her advice and support, just as she was the only person who could console and counsel him.

Attended by only four servants she arrived at Yuste on March 3, 1558. When Charles saw his sister Mary, who during the last years had been inseparable from the Queen of France, enter the room alone, he seemed to realize for the first time that he would never see Éléonore, whom he had always called his "dearest sister", again. Did the Emperor see what his doctor noticed: that the Queen of Hungary, who sobbed as she kissed his hand, seemed to have aged a great deal since her last visit and looked pale and ill?

In any case Charles allowed her this time to stay at Yuste. She spent five days with him, and asked his advice about how she should arrange her life and where she should settle now that Éléonore's wishes no longer counted and Éléonore's income would no longer supplement her own. The Emperor knew that his son Philip had but one desire: that the Queen of Hungary should return to the Netherlands as regent, which would give him the opportunity of paying a highly necessary visit to Spain. He pointed out to Mary that such a return, which would put at her disposal a home of her own and a practically unlimited income, would be the very solution for herself as well as for the dynasty. But Mary dismissed the idea with great determination. She would live where her brother wished, she declared, as long as he did

not compel her to assume the government of the Netherlands once again. She would rather go and live among the Indians than go back to the Netherlands.

Mary told her brother that she would prefer to settle in Guadalajara, as she would have done with her sister, where she could devote herself to her favorite sport. The Emperor, knowing she liked luxury, advised her not to choose a place where she would have to live in greater style than her income allowed. After some hesitation she finally decided to settle provisionally in Cigalés, two miles from Valladolid. She requested the Emperor to plead her cause with his son, whom she wanted to ask for a pension to supplement her income and enable her to purchase some properties in the neighborhood of Toledo which she would like to acquire.

During their conversations Mary broached a subject which made Charles look up in surprise, so completely at variance was it with her repeated assurances that she never again wished to occupy herself with affairs of state. She proposed that she should assist him if he planned to attend the Castilian Cortes, and further that she should become adviser to her niece, the Regent Juana, in all affairs in which her counsel might be desired.

Was this a flight from the loneliness and uselessness of her existence, which since Éléonore's death had no aim? Or was Charles's secretary Gastelú right when he wrote that the Queen of Hungary still had a passion for affairs of state, even though she maintained the contrary?

After his sister's departure for Jarandilla, where she had to settle Éléonore's estate, the Emperor hastened to inform the Regent Juana of Mary's wishes and proposals. He expressed the view that as far as the properties near Toledo were concerned she should be treated like any other private person, but that she might be consulted in matters concerning the Netherlands, about which she was of course better informed than anyone else.

The Princess Regent rejected Mary's offer to act as adviser with great coldness. She must not have doubted for a moment the true significance of this proposal. Through her own lust for power Juana was too much like the Queen of Hungary ever to tolerate such an authoritative adviser. She frankly told Quijada, whom the Emperor had sent to approach the Regent and her Council with the idea, that the Queen's character would certainly not permit her to be content with so little. And she wrote

her father the Emperor that she had forbidden Quijada to submit her aunt's proposal to the Council of State, since she was convinced that it could not be his intention to detract from the authority with which her brother Philip had invested her as Regent of Spain.

After she had settled her sister's affairs, Mary went to Cigalés to await the answer from Philip which should decide her future way of life. But the restlessness that had troubled her increasingly since Éléonore's death drove her on. The day after her arrival she rode to the palace at Valladolid to confer with the Princess Regent. On the following day she went there again, arriving even before the palace gates had been opened, and returning to Cigalés only late in the evening. Had she tried to persuade her niece to consult her about affairs of state? Did her visit concern the settlement of Éléonore's estate, of which she was executor? Or had she talked to the Regent about the request she had addressed to Philip and been given to understand that her demands were indiscreet? When on May 10, 1558, she signed another letter to Philip, she did not mention her wish to acquire the properties in the province of Toledo. She only asked to be allowed a life interest in them, but she emphasized that she did not wish to be dependent upon the royal magistrates and therefore wanted to exercise jurisdiction there herself. The places she asked for, wrote Mary, were small and unimportant; merely thirteen hundred and sixteen persons lived there and they did not produce more than 986 ducats, principally in grain. Her only desire was to live as retired a life as possible to the end of her days. In order to have something to do she intended to farm and to that end asked for two fields suitable for the purpose which she, alas, could not pay for, since her meagre income was not even sufficient to furnish her house. As she had dedicated her life to the service of his father and himself, it seemed to her that this was the least Philip could do for her.

This letter Mary entrusted to her chamberlain Bredan, whom she sent to the Netherlands in order to discuss it with Philip and if necessary to defend her interests personally. Now nothing remained for her to do but to wait for weeks and perhaps for months, until Bredan should bring an answer that would put an end to her uncertainty and above all to the horrible situation she remembered but too well from the first years of her widowhood: that her income was insufficient for the manner of life

to which she was accustomed, so that she ran into ever-mounting debts.

During these months in Cigalés Mary was lonelier than she had ever been since as a child she had left the Netherlands to live among strangers in an unknown country. Her few Netherlands servants suffered as she did from the merciless climate, the unaccustomed surroundings, and longed as she did for the cool woods around Brussels. Now that her days no longer had a purpose, and she could only wait helplessly for what the future might bring her, it seemed to her as though the past held her prisoner. The past, which surrounded her in the tapestries that decorated her rooms, glorifying her brother's victories, in the portraits of those who had gone through life with her and had determined or influenced her fate. From the walls of her bedroom and her library their motionless faces looked down upon her. There was the blond Hungarian who had been her husband and who, after thirty years, she had come to consider as a gentle saint. There was the Emperor in whose service she had consumed her life, and who now cared only for the future of his son, for his clocks, for his orange trees at Yuste. There was Christina of Denmark as the shy little "widow of Milan", who had found a temporary home in Brussels. There was the naïve, gentle face of Éléonore, elegant in her French velvet. And there was the haughty portrait of Philip of Spain, whom she had refused to serve and upon whose good will her future now depended. Philip of Spain, who in those months of 1558, while Mary of Hungary awaited his answer in the glowing heat of Cigalés, decided the fate of the woman whose help was at that moment indispensable to him, since only her return would enable him to leave the Netherlands which he disliked so much. The woman he hated for her ambition, hated because she had left her post, and over whom he now felt he might triumph. Mary's humble but demanding letter reached him when he had already asked his father and his sister to urge the Queen of Hungary to return to the Netherlands as regent. Now she herself provided him with a means by which to force her to what she had already so often refused to do. Philip added to his aunt's letter a note meant for one of his closest advisers:

"You will see from this letter that the Queen is very well able to look after herself and that she surely has somebody who advises her in her own interest without heeding the respect

she owes me, since she recognizes me in no way as her superior. And I wish that apart from His Majesty the Emperor no one in my kingdoms shall consider himself superior. I do not need to give her much of an answer before she takes her decision. Tell me or write me your opinion about this."

The adviser attached to the letter a sheet of paper with the following notes:

"Explain to her how great the necessity is. Remind her of the love and devotion she has always shown. That she can never give greater proof of it than by altering her decision now and that in doing this she will serve God better than if she follows her own will. Offer her for the duration of her life new estates which are to her liking. Explain to her what a support her presence will mean to whoever will rule the country, even if she leads a completely retired life. Finally offer her a large income and great authority and give her hope that there will be peace and that this will last a long time, as the rulers are all exhausted."

Philip followed this advice. The Archbishop of Toledo left Brussels with a letter for the Queen of Hungary and the mission of informing her by word of mouth of the emergency in which the Netherlands found themselves and begging her most urgently to return to her former post. At the same time Philip wrote with his own hand to his father the Emperor, to ask him to use his personal influence in persuading his sister to agree.

Thus, in August 1558, the net was spread from which Mary would not be able to escape. She received Philip's letter and found the strength not to give in but to refuse his request, even though she must have assumed that now she could expect little help from him in her private affairs. She once again enumerated the reasons for her refusal in a detailed letter, which she signed on September 7. But she had had no opportunity to send it off when she received a visit from her niece, the Regent Juana, who came to hand her a letter in which the Emperor himself begged her to agree to his son's request. At the same time Juana carried out her father's orders to explain once more by word of mouth what interests were at stake for the Habsburg dynasty. "Inform the Queen", Charles had written to his daughter, "that she should not permit our dynasty to be so sullied and dishonored during our lifetime as would be the case if the honor and heritage of our ancestors, which we have been able to preserve until today, and for which she herself has so often taken so much trouble, should

be lost, to our shame and to the shame of the King who is just as much her son as mine. Tell her that I have such great confidence in her goodness and in the love and the affection she has always shown me and the King, that I am convinced that, in spite of everything she has declared to me or to third parties, seeing the great danger which threatens our House, she will reach the decision to return to the Netherlands in order to ward it off. That is the best way in which she can serve God, and the greatest benefit towards everyone, in the first place towards our House, for which the King and I would owe her the deepest gratitude. Point out to her that I would not place this burden upon her, but would gladly take it upon myself, if I had the health and the strength to do so." And in a postscript in his own hand the Emperor added: "Point out to the Queen that the downfall, the loss of honor and the ruin of the King and of our House, as well as the means of preventing all this, rest in her hands."

When she read this letter Mary was overwhelmed by a deep emotion. Here spoke the sovereign whom she had blindly obeyed for a quarter of a century, the head of her House whose will had been her law, the brother who still was the chief purpose of her life and more than ever before her "all in this world". Everything that was strong and unconquerable in her rose up and was prepared. Yet the aversion to the office she had fulfilled for all too long a time, the certainty that her return would be useless in saving the Netherlands, paralyzed her will. She was unable to reach a decision. She let Juana return to Valladolid. Promised an answer soon. For two days she struggled with herself.

Then news came from Yuste. Her brother the Emperor had suddenly been stricken by an unusually high fever, attended with agonizing headaches such as he had never known. Apparently he had the gloomiest forebodings, for despite his grave indisposition he had immediately revised his will.

The knowledge that Charles was ill and perhaps in danger of his life put an end to Mary's struggle. She made her decision. She at once sent her physician, who had looked after the Emperor before, to Yuste. She mounted her horse. She rode to Valladolid. There was no time to form a clear idea of what she wished to say there. But meeting her niece Juana and Philip's servant Garcilaso de la Vega, she told them that she had made up her mind. That she was prepared to return to the Netherlands, but not as

regent. On the same day de la Vega rode off to Yuste to convey this comforting news to the sick Emperor.

Two days later an express messenger left for the Netherlands with a second letter from the Queen of Hungary to King Philip, in which her first and negative reply was enclosed. She wrote how the Emperor's request had thrown her into the greatest confusion she had ever known in her life. Her boundless love and respect for the Emperor, the submissiveness to his wishes in which she had always lived and which she wished to sustain till the end of her life, compelled her to do what he asked of her. On the other hand her conscience would not permit her to take on a government function again, since she felt totally unable to carry out what the King and the Emperor seemed to expect of her. She therefore begged her nephew to forgive her for still refusing the office of regent, since this was a matter of her conscience and salvation.

But to show Philip how much weight the Emperor's letter had carried with her, and how much she loved him and was prepared to exert her "old body" for such services as she could still render, she agreed to return to the Netherlands on the conditions which she had already mentioned to the Emperor and which he, she assumed, would accept. She requested that the regency should not be mentioned again; that she should be allowed to return to Spain with Philip; that she should be given sufficient means on her departure to conduct the war against France for the first year, and that the necessary funds for the following year would be transmitted to her.

For herself she only desired the estates near Toledo which she had mentioned before. During her journey, and during the time she would spend in the Netherlands, she wished to alter nothing in her way of life or her small court. Unfortunately she would not be able to pay for the costs of her journey and asked her nephew to enable her to carry out her mission in as modest a manner as was compatible with his own royal dignity. As she did not doubt that the Emperor would accept her conditions, thus Mary ended her letter, she would at once begin preparations for her journey.

When the news that the Queen of Hungary had agreed to return to the Netherlands reached him, Charles V was no longer capable of formally accepting Mary's conditions. On September 8

Garcilaso de la Vega arrived at Yuste, exhausted after a night's ride, and was able to see with his own eyes the joy on the dying Emperor's face when he learned that his sister was willing to carry out his wish and was already preparing to leave. Would His Majesty permit the Queen to visit him before she left, to nurse him, as she so ardently wished to do? But with the few words he was still able to utter, Charles signified that he wished to receive no one, to see no one. Now that he knew that his sister would take over his task, would assist his son, would rescue the dynasty, he only wanted to turn away from life. The monks of Yuste surrounded him with their prayers and litanies, and the pious murmur of their voices was the last sound that penetrated to him when the crucifix which his wife had clasped on her death-bed sank from his hand.

On September 21 a messenger left the monastery of Yuste on his way to Valladolid. The Emperor was no longer among the living.

The news of her brother's death robbed Mary of Hungary of the last remnants of her strength. It was as if the source from which she had again and again drawn strength for action had dried up. Now she had nothing left but a hard and hopeless sense of duty, the grim will to execute what her brother had demanded of her and to redeem the pledge by which she had given him his last moment of joy. But his death left an emptiness in her which no will power could fill. The sorrow at his loss, the hopelessness of her lonely future, exhausted her as during the Emperor's lifetime the hardest work had never been able to do.

While in the port of Laredo the fleet was being prepared that was to carry her back to the Netherlands, while the royal treasurers worked day and night to collect the gold she wished to take with her to finance the war against France, while in Cigalés her servants struggled with trunks and packing cases, Mary lay ill in bed in the royal palace at Valladolid. During the first half of October she twice suffered such severe heart attacks that her doctors assumed both times that she had died. But twice the will to obey her brother's wish had conquered the weariness of her exhausted heart. After a few days she even felt sufficiently recovered to return to Cigalés to finish the last preparations necessary before she could set out for Laredo. But in the practically empty house at Cigalés Mary had another severe attack of suf-

focation, combined with high fever. The Regent Juana, who visited her aunt, found her weak and spent. Spent, but firmly determined to make the journey her brother had begged her to undertake. And once again it seemed as if her strength of will had prevailed, as if her weary body would let itself be driven on to accomplish the long trip on horseback, the dangerous sea voyage, the work which was to preserve the Netherlands for the House of Habsburg.

On the morning of October 18 Mary awoke from a refreshing sleep. She felt quite recovered and more cheerful than she had been since Charles' death, so that Juana was surprised and the doctors declared her out of danger. She felt hungry, and a strong broth was prepared for her which she drank in bed while Juana kept her company. She must get entirely well quickly, for already weeks had passed since her promise, and the task which awaited her in the north was becoming ever more urgent. And in the harbor at Laredo the fleet lay ready, waiting . . .

Suddenly she shivered. Gasping for breath, she sank back among the pillows. The doctors hastened to her . . .

This time the iron will lost its struggle against the unwilling heart. At four o'clock in the afternoon her pulse was no longer perceptible. At half past eight in the evening the Regent of Spain stood beside a deathbed. In spite of herself Mary of Hungary had withdrawn from the task she had still wished to complete out of love for her brother.

In Laredo the fleet lay ready, waiting . . .

But she who was to have embarked there had found another harbor.

Notes



THE CROWN OF ST. STEPHEN

CHAPTER ONE

1. Philippe de Commines, *Mémoires*, III, p. 584.
2. Moeller, *Éléonore d'Autriche*,* p. 13.
3. Molinet, *Chroniques*, II, Ch. CCCXVI, pp. 560-61, mentions around ten o'clock in the morning—"environ 10 heures du matin"—as the hour of Mary's birth, while the Venetian ambassador gives it as an hour before noon—"una hora avanti mezo zorno" (von Höfler, *Depeschen*, p. 114).
4. Höfler, *Depeschen*, p. 123.
5. Molinet, loc. cit. Cf. Höfler, p. 117.
6. Molinet, p. 560.
7. Huber, *Geschichte Oesterreichs*, III, p. 4 ff.
8. Ibid., p. 148.
9. Ibid., p. 266.
10. Ibid., p. 291, citing Ulmann, *Die Wahl Maximilians I*, in *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte*, XXII, p. 146 ff.
11. For this entire period see Huber, III, p. 299 ff.; also Fessler-Klein, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, III, p. 221 et seq.
12. Fessler-Klein, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, p. 246.
13. Moeller, p. 21.
14. Chmel, ed., *Urkunden*, p. 261.
15. Bruchet and Lancien, *Itinéraire de Marguerite d'Autriche*, p. 357.
16. Moeller, pp. 42-43.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Bauer and Lacroix, *Die Korrespondenz Ferdinands I*, p. 10.
2. Ulmann, *Kaiser Maximilian I*, II, p. 266 et seq.
3. . . . "aber doch noch auf einem Knopf!" Ibid., p. 277.
4. Fessler-Klein, p. 282.
5. Ortway, Tivadár, *Mária Lajos II Király néje*, p. 64.
6. Ulmann, II, pp. 282-83.

* See Bibliography for complete names of authors and complete titles of books.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Bruchet and Lancien, p. 334.
2. van den Bergh, *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche*, II, p. 105.
3. Le Glay, *Correspondance de l'Empereur Maximilian I*, II, p. 252.
4. van den Bergh, II, p. 93.
5. Ortway, p. 36.
6. Cartwright, *Christina of Denmark*, p. 15.
7. Le Glay, p. 278.
8. For conditions in Hungary during the reign of Vladislav II see Neustadt, *Ungarn's Verfall*, pp. 313, 387 ff.
9. Cuspinianus, *Diarium de Congressu*, in Freher, II, p. 606. Cf. *Geschichte der Stadt Wien*, IV, pp. 287-88.
10. Horawitz, *Der Humanismus in Wien*, p. 139.
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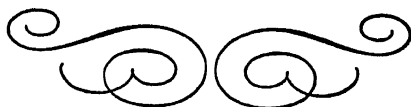


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